

Writing East

THE "TRAVELS" OF
SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE

Iain Macleod Higgins



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Writing East

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The “Travels” of Sir John Mandeville

Iain Macleod Higgins

PENN

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Preface

DEFINED IN THE MOST GENERAL TERMS, the present book is a case study in two subjects: textmaking and worldmaking. By worldmaking, a term I borrow from Nelson Goodman, I mean here the discursive construction of a specific geographical, natural, human, and theological world out of already existing worlds that were likewise fashioned discursively and/or cartographically. By textmaking, I mean in particular the common medieval practice of making new works out of “olde bokes” by recomposing them, whether through turning already existing material from various sources into a single “original” compilation, as Vincent of Beauvais did in making his famous encyclopedia, or through “overwriting” a given precursor, as Chaucer did in writing *Troilus and Criseyde* over Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato*. In both cases, then, the term “making” refers not to *ex nihilo* creation, but rather to remaking, which is to say that any remade text or world stands in a dynamic and dialogic relation to its sources and predecessors.¹

The world in question here is the East between Constantinople and the Earthly Paradise, as it was known and imagined by Latin Christian writers and cartographers between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, and specifically that East as represented in the particular text in question: *Mandeville’s Travels*, to use the modern editorial title, or *The Book of John Mandeville*, as I prefer to call it after its common medieval designation.² Originally compiled in French sometime around 1360, this diverting, instructive, and moralizing tour of the medieval East quickly became one of the most popular and widely circulated writings of its time, being translated into nine other languages, including Latin, and often reworked in the process. As a result of its extensive circulation and variously free or faithful transmission, *The Book* is extant in some three hundred manuscripts that represent two major variants of the *Mandeville*-author’s original compilation and some half a dozen different forms, including two short verse redactions.

There are, as Brian Stock has written, “few genuinely privileged texts” for students of the Middle Ages “and many works which, for other than purely literary purposes, have important stories to tell.”³ As a paradoxically *sui generis* representative of the fluid, omnivorous, long-lived, and consequential genre defined by the traveler’s book about Elsewhere and Otherness, *The*

Book of John Mandeville is one such work, and *Writing East* is my attempt to explore and comment on some of the stories that this multilingual “multi-text” has to relate both about itself and about what might be called medieval Orientalism. At the heart of this exploration and commentary, as I explain in the introduction, is an extended palimpsestic or “topological” reading of *The Book* that follows the work in its unfolding from one end of the world to the other while paying close attention to its rhetorical, thematic, and ideological elements and strategies. Above all, my reading seeks to do justice to *The Book*’s intratextual as well as its intertextual multiplicity by focusing not only on the *Mandeville*-author’s dialogic manner of overwriting his precursors and sources, but also on the ways in which the resulting text was itself rendered and rewritten in the most widely circulated, influential, or interesting “isotopes”—all of which illustrate Bernard Cerquiglini’s claim that “medieval writing does not produce variants; it is variance.”⁴ In addition to the two main French versions (the Continental and Insular Versions), I examine several English renderings (the Bodley, Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Metrical Versions), two German translations (Michel Velser’s and Otto von Diemerin-gen’s), and the compressed Latin redaction consulted by many Renaissance cosmographers (the so-called Vulgate Latin Version).

Writing East, then, is an experiment in literary and cultural criticism, whose principal innovation is the attempt to read a historically significant medieval book in a manner responsive to the alterity of its multiple textual existence. Such inter- and intra-textual multiplicity is the overwhelming fact about medieval writing, and yet it has not often affected the ways in which scholars make use of “olde bokes” for literary, cultural, or historical studies, even though reading for textual variance allows us to see things that we would otherwise miss and draws our attention to the active and engaged nature of much cultural production and reproduction. By implication, the present case study articulates a model for reading medieval writing in its various forms of multiplicity. Some of its specific claims about the mandevillean multi-text and medieval culture will no doubt be subject to correction and dispute, but I hope that my general methods and aims will provoke further reflection and speculation, whether on *The Book of John Mandeville*, late medieval culture, or certain basic practical and theoretical questions relevant to any attempt to make sense of a distant and different past through its texts.

Any scholarly study owes more than its author can know or acknowledge to the influence and work of others. This one has its metaphorical grandparents in the work of Scott D. Westrem and Mary B. Campbell, whose studies have shown how much can be learned from looking closely at medieval geographical and travel writings. My most immediate debts—over and above

those to *The Book's* editors and textual scholars, without whose labors this study in medieval textuality, translation, and reception history could not have been written—are to other critics and scholars who have written on *The Book*. I sometimes take issue with their claims, but I am grateful to all of them, as much for the insights that come of disagreement as for those that come of an emphatic “yes” mentally penciled in the margin.

I am indebted to institutions, colleagues, students, friends, and family in all the smaller and larger ways familiar to anyone who has ever written a scholarly book while adapting to a first tenure-track teaching job, commuting long distance, recovering from a broken hip, or raising a small child. For financial support, I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (S.S.H.R.C., Standard Research Grant, 410-90-172). For much of the textual material that enabled my research, I am grateful to the efficient and courteous staff in the Interlibrary Loans department at the University of British Columbia, especially Pat Dunn. For invitations to lecture to the general public on Mandeville and medieval travel writing, I am grateful to John Tucker at the University of Victoria and Helen Damico at the University of New Mexico. For their editorial support of this book, I am grateful to Edward Peters and Jerome E. Singerman of the University of Pennsylvania Press, while for their timely and helpful response to the version initially submitted, I want to thank the Press's anonymous reader and James Muldoon. For answers to questions about medieval German or Latin syntax, I want to thank Elizabeth Archibald, Martin Blum, Siân Echard, and Karl Zaenker. For information, advice, or encouragement, I want to thank Larry D. Benson, Benjamin Braude, Andrzej Busza, Mary B. Campbell, A.S.G. Edwards, John Wilson Foster, Frank Grady, W.H. New, Stephen Partridge, Derek Pearsall, David Staines, Nicholas Watson, and Christian K. Zacher. For intellectual and emotional support that redefined the limits of patience and generosity, I especially want to thank Jadwiga and Bogdan Czaykowski, Fraser Easton, and Scott D. Westrem; only they can know how much they have contributed to the making of this book. The same is even truer for Ewa Czaykowska, *bez której nie . . .* The responsibility for errors as well as for advice not taken is mine alone. All unattributed translations are my own, and have been made with a view to literalness rather than elegance.

Writing East is for my father, John Higgins, and in memory of my mother, Agnes (Macleod) Higgins, whose exemplary strength of character in the face of a terrible illness made the labors of completing this book seem as nothing.

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Abbreviations

<i>Bodley</i>	M. C. Seymour, ed., <i>The Bodley Version of Mandeville's Travels</i>
<i>Buke</i>	George F. Warner, ed., <i>The Buke of John Maundeuill</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
HMT	P. Hamelius, ed., <i>Mandeville's Travels</i>
HS	Hakluyt Society
<i>LIM</i>	Richard Hakluyt, ed., <i>Liber Ioannis Mandevil</i>
LMT	Malcolm Letts, ed., <i>Mandeville's Travels</i>
LPPTS	<i>Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society</i> , 13 vols. London, 1887–97. Rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971.
<i>Metrical</i>	M. C. Seymour, ed., <i>The Metrical Version of Mandeville's Travels</i>
OD	Edward W. Crosby, ed., <i>Otto von Diemerigen</i>
ODIO	Sven Martinsson, ed., <i>Itinerarium Orientale</i>
OPE	Odoric of Pordenone, <i>The Eastern Parts of the World Described</i>
OPR	Odoric of Pordenone, <i>Relatio</i>
OPV	Odoric of Pordenone, <i>Les Voyages</i>
<i>SJMR</i>	Eric John Morrall, ed., <i>Sir John Mandevilles Reisebeschreibung</i>
SMT	M. C. Seymour, ed., <i>Mandeville's Travels</i>
<i>TBJM</i>	<i>The Book of John Mandeville</i>
TPE	<i>The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: Facsimile of Pynson's Edition of 1496</i>
WBL	William of Boldensele, "Des Edelherrn Wilhelm von Boldensele Reise nach dem gelobten Lande."
WBT	William of Boldensele, [<i>Un traictie de lestat de la terre sainte</i>]

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I

Introduction

The Prodigious East

FOR ADAM AND EVE ON THEIR JOURNEY from Paradise into History, east was the direction of exile, loss, and new beginnings. Behind them lay the unpeopled enclosure of a naturally blissful life, barred now by cherubim and a flaming sword, while ahead lay a cursed existence on “the subjected Plain,” soon to be the boundless scene of manual and maternal labor, fraternal murder, and further exile for some of their progeny. For their medieval Christian descendents in Europe, though, east was the direction of return, restoration, and old beginnings: in short, of origins. By traveling east they could make their way to the very “navel of the earth,” the divinely privileged theater where the new Eve and the second Adam had made possible the return journey from History to Paradise.¹ This medieval sense of the East as the source and symbolic center of a new world order was especially strong between the late eleventh and the fifteenth centuries. During that time Jerusalem and the Holy Land became virtually fetishistic objects of desire, stirring the devout, diabolical, or ambitious souls not simply of popes and princes, or even of poets, lunatics, saints, mercenaries, and propagandists, but also of ordinary men, women, and children.

There are many things that could illustrate the nature and consequences of medieval Christian Europe’s at once real and imagined relations with the East: the custom of penitential pilgrimage; the numerous treatises *de locis sanctis*; the theological justification of violence in defense of a political Christ; the aborted Children’s Crusade of 1212; the maps of Palestine drawn by Matthew Paris or Marino Sanudo; the pogroms against European Jews; the meeting in Damietta in 1219 between St. Francis of Assisi and the Sultan al-Kamil; the reliquary built in Paris in 1246 to display the Crown of Thorns and other relics; or vernacular narratives and memoirs like Joinville’s pious *Vie de Saint Louis*, Margery Kempe’s troubling retelling of her visions and crying fits while visiting Calvary, and the brutal English romance *Richard Cœur de Lion*. But

among all these examples one in particular seems to me to stand out. It does so because it occurs in a document that has nothing to do with Jerusalem or the Holy Land, and thus illustrates how far-reaching the medieval obsession with the East could be; in addition, it happens to suggest that Latin Christian designs on the biblical East can be seen as the first moves in a long, slow, and often discontinuous process of European expansion that well outlasted Latin Christendom itself, and whose bright traces and disfiguring scars still mark not only the surface of the globe but the lives of millions of people.

The example I have in mind is a passing reference to Jerusalem in a medieval sailor's log under the date Wednesday 26 December 1492. That sailor was Christopher Columbus, and he made the reference as he found himself off an unknown island (the present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic, which he named Española) during his first attempt to reach the oneiric East by way of the untried West:

And he [Columbus] says that he hopes in God that on the return . . . he would find a barrel of gold that those who were left would have acquired by exchange; and that they would have found the gold mine and the spicery, and those things in such quantity that the sovereigns . . . will undertake and prepare to go conquer the Holy Sepulcher; for thus (says he) I urged Your Highnesses to spend all the profits of this my enterprise on the conquest of Jerusalem, and Your Highnesses laughed and said that it would please them and that even without this profit they had that desire. These are the Admiral's words.²

Presumably they are (the log itself as Columbus kept it has not survived, and is known only from the edited transcription made by Bartolomé de las Casas). But even if they are not quite the Admiral's own words, these and others like them in his writings reveal that there was more to the medieval East than its association with the central event of Salvation History and thus with the ultimate terrestrial goal of pilgrims and crusaders. The gold, for instance, that Columbus so desired for financing the conquest of the Holy Sepulcher had to be somewhere near "Española," and it had to be there by the barrellful, since he knew from his studies preparatory to this his "enterprise of the Indies" that he must have been within reach of Cathay, the indescribably wealthy and powerful empire of the Great Khan "discovered" to Latin Christendom above all through Marco Polo's *Divisament dou monde* (c. 1298)³ and Friar Odoric of Pordenone's *Relatio* (1330).

The medieval East, then, went beyond Jerusalem to take in the vaguely-defined space of a brave new world whose rumored existence was being increasingly confirmed by the reports of missionaries, envoys, and merchants since the mid-thirteenth century, and whose characteristics were quickly asso-

ciated with those of the marvelous lands, peoples, and events already known through the abundant and often apocryphal inheritance of ancient, biblical, and Christian traditions. By Polo's time, when some two centuries of extra-European expansion had reached its geographical limits, Latin Christendom regarded the East in its extension from Constantinople to the Earthly Paradise as a kaleidoscopic theater filled with the most remarkable props and scenes of wonder and terror: natural marvels; monstrous races; the exploits and cities of Alexander the Great; St. Thomas in India venerated by a community of "Indian Christians"; the threat of Islam; the relics of the holy; the sectarian Churches; the trade in silk and spices; the struggles of the Crusaders; the shimmering dream of Prester John's Christian kingdom; the uncertain hope of the Mongols; the diversity of custom, law, and faith; and the apocalyptic nightmare of Gog, Magog, and Antichrist.

The world stretched, as the Wife of Bath knew and the "T-O" maps illustrated, all the way "from Denmark unto Ynde,"⁴ and fully half of it lay in this originary, marvelous, tempting, troubling, and slowly expanding East. "From Denmark unto Ynde" is a strange phrase to modern ears, but a revealing one, since it shows the Wife—a woman acquainted by travel and marriage alike with quite a range of medieval commonplaces—imagining the world in which she moved, married, and had her being as arranged along an east-west axis according to a geographical scheme inherited from classical antiquity.

Among the many conduits of this scheme was Orosius's early fifth-century *History Against the Pagans*, a kind of supplement to Augustine's *City of God Against the Pagans* and one of the most long-lived and widely circulated books of the Middle Ages. Orosius begins his revisionist *History* with a gesture imitated by many medieval historians: to "describe the world itself" first, to place history under the sign of geography. The point of this description is to supply an appropriate setting for the subsequent "universal" narrative, and the setting that Orosius provides is one that would have been familiar a millennium later to both the Wife of Bath and the Admiral of the Ocean Sea: "Our ancestors," Orosius asserts, "fixed a threefold decision of the whole world surrounded by a periphery of ocean, and its three parts they called Asia, Europe, and Africa. . . . Asia, surrounded on three sides by the Ocean, extends across the entire region of the east"—and, due to the peculiarities of medieval geography, will effectively come to include what modern geography calls northeastern Africa (Egypt and Ethiopia).⁵

The outlines and the relative proportions of this inherited scheme, as well as the spatial prominence it gave to the East, remained unchanged until the time of Columbus. At that point, the received division of the world into a tripartite circle of lands had finally to be abandoned, while the increasing

use of the compass meant that European world maps would henceforth follow the modern-looking portolans and have a northern rather than an eastern “orientation.” What did change in the millennium prior to the European encounter with the Americas was the general conception of the world that lay within the classical outlines. As many of the surviving circular *mappaemundi* show, most notably the Ebstorf and Hereford maps, medieval drawings of the face of the earth were eventually modified so as to represent a “Christian topography”: that is, the space contained within the boundaries of each of the three continents came to be depicted as a repository of miscellaneous information and above all as the scene of historical events important to Latin Christians. Thus Eden and its four rivers, Ararat and Noah’s ark, the Tower of Babel, the Red Sea, and Gog and Magog all found a prominent place in the semi-circle of Asia, as did Alexander the Great, the trees of the Sun and the Moon, and, in some instances, Prester John. Over time and possibly as a consequence of crusading ideology, Jerusalem even came to be located at the exact center of these maps (where it was often represented with the Cross or the Holy Sepulcher), and once it was placed there the East as a whole could be seen to stretch from the Holy City to the Earthly Paradise—both of which were sites of increasing interest to Columbus on his four western voyages.⁶

This Christian topography was perhaps elaborated as much by way of symbolic compensation for geographical and historical actuality as in confirmation of theological Reality, since one of the paradoxical effects of medieval western European expansion was to make it clear that Latin Christendom occupied only the lower left quadrant of the circle of lands, and not even all of that. Even in the heady decades after the First Crusade (1096–99) when the Latin Christian occupation of Palestine and Syria looked to be a success, the English historian William of Malmesbury could play this mournful variation on the geographical theme inherited from antiquity (piping it through the mouth of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095, where the Crusade was first proclaimed):

The world is not evenly divided. Of its three parts, our enemies hold Asia as their hereditary home—a part of the world which our forefathers rightly considered equal to the other two put together. Yet here formerly our Faith put out its branches; here all the Apostles save two met their deaths. But now the Christians of those parts, if there are any left, squeeze a bare subsistence from the soil and pay tribute to their enemies, looking to us with silent longing for the liberty they have lost. Africa, too, the second part of the world, has been held by our enemies by force of arms for two hundred years and more, a danger to Christendom all the greater because it formerly sustained the brightest spirits. . . . Thirdly, there is Europe, the remaining region of the world. Of this region we Christians inhabit only a part. . . . This little portion of the world which is ours is pressed upon by warlike Turks and Saracens: for three hundred years they have held Spain and the Balearic Islands, and they live in hope of devouring the rest.⁷

For some writers, to be sure, the space of the East in relation to Latin Christendom was not an issue. The storyteller Chrétien de Troyes in the late twelfth century and the historian Jean Froissart two hundred years later both viewed the world's east-west axis positively, as a matter of intellectual, literary, and political history. Looking to the ancient rather than the contemporary East, they regarded themselves as the heirs of an inevitable westward transfer of knowledge and power: the *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*. In Chrétien's confident phrasing, geography and history come together with an almost simple-minded faith in textual authority: "Our books have taught us that pre-eminence in chivalry and learning [clergie] once belonged to Greece. Then chivalry passed to Rome, and the highest learning, which now has come to France." Space and time come together in much the same fashion for Froissart, whose *Chroniques* trace at greater length the westward passage of "Prowess" ("Proeche") from biblical antiquity all the way to fourteenth-century England.⁸

But for those who thought in terms of Christian History and the Church's universal mission—and for whom the concept of *translatio* thus implied that "the transference of dominion from one empire to another is the result of a sinful misuse of that dominion"—such sanguine views were harder to adopt. For them, as for William of Malmesbury, the space of the East was most certainly an issue, since the absence or loss of overseas Christian dominion could only be understood as a threat, challenge, or divine rebuke. Hence the quite different conjunction of geography and history that occurs in a piece of crusading propaganda addressed in 1330 to King Philip VI of France by a Dominican who had lived and traveled in the East during the low ebb of medieval Christian expansion. "We who are the true Christians," the writer lamented, "are not the tenth, not even the twentieth part [of humanity]." Hence too the missionary tenor of Columbus's address to the King and Queen of Spain at the beginning of his log: "you thought of sending me, Christóbal Colón, to the said regions of India to see the said princes and the peoples . . . and to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken."⁹

Clearly, the East as it was known to Latin Christendom between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries was a vast and varied place. It was the fertile ground of an imagined community's noblest hopes, wildest dreams, and worst fears—at once the distant source of its chivalry, learning, and historical covenant with God, the outlandish location of its most sacred, coveted, and finally unattainable sites, and the slowly expanding theater of its most reverent, bewildered, disgraceful, and disturbing encounters with Otherness.¹⁰

It is this East that forms both the pretext and the intertext of the subject of my book: this imaginary, conceptual, and actual space as it was envisioned, elaborated, and encountered in the centuries before Vasco da Gama sailed

south and Columbus sailed west in search of new routes toward its Indian shores.¹¹ I say “pretext and intertext,” because I am concerned here chiefly with the discursive making and remaking of the East in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Specifically, I intend to pursue a twofold subject that seems to me to be as wide-ranging as it is focused, as fruitful as it is underexplored: the representation of the multiple East in a singular medieval text, *The Book of John Mandeville*, and the writing and rewriting of this single, yet multiple book itself.

The Book of John Mandeville, Then and Now

It is uncertain exactly when, where, or under whose shaping hand *The Book of John Mandeville* was originally composed and released for circulation. The text itself in most surviving versions and copies tells us only that it was set down in 1356 (or 1357) by its English namesake, a knight born and raised in St. Albans—a set of small claims that some one hundred and fifty years of scholarly detective work have failed to confirm beyond a reasonable doubt. What this long search has established, though, is that *The Book*, like Polo’s *Divisament*, was first put together in French, and that the earliest dated manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS nouv. acq. fr. 4515), commissioned for Charles V of France by his physician, was copied in 1371. Since the text of the king’s manuscript shows signs throughout of having been copied from a poor exemplar, and since the *Mandeville*-author’s known sources were available by the mid 1350s, it seems likely that *The Book* was made sometime around 1356 or 1357 as the text states. There has been some debate over whether the *Mandeville*-author initially released his work in Britain or on the Continent, and the matter is still unresolved, but the available evidence points somewhat more clearly to a Continental than to an Insular origin. Whatever the case, within about fifty years of 1356 *The Book* was circulating widely on both sides of the English Channel in a total of eight languages—French, Czech, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin—and within about fifty years more it would be available in another two: Danish and Irish.¹²

The Book thus entered the small world of Latin Christendom and began its remarkable textual travels at a propitiously inauspicious moment, when its potential readers and hearers were doubtless ready for a work that offered them, among other things, an entertaining inventory of eastern “choses estranges” mixed with a celebration of “universal” religious devotion, a critique of contemporary Christian failings, and intermittent prophecies of Christian world dominion. The surprisingly long-lived Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,

for instance, was now a distant memory, its last stronghold (Acre) having fallen in 1291, although the dream of its recovery was being kept alive in everything from small-scale crusades and pro-crusading tracts to popular romances, while the continuing *Reconquista* in Spain and the newly emerged *Reisen* in Lithuania were keeping the knights of the Faith busy at both ends of Christendom.

Alive too was the dream of still greater expansion born of the astonishingly naïve and ambitious thirteenth-century missions to central and eastern Asia, which had resulted in the establishment of Franciscan bishoprics in Khanbaliq (Beijing) in 1307 and Zaitun (Ch'uan-chou-fu) in 1308. As recently as 1353 the Avignonese papal legate to the Great Khan, John of Marignolli (or Marignola), had, like a latter-day Marco Polo, returned from a fifteen-year journey that took him as far as the archbishopric of Tartary in Khanbaliq.¹³ Shortly after John's return, however, the hope of any eastern alliance, let alone expansion, ceased to be even a remote possibility. Between 1360 and 1405, the now infamous Tamerlane (Timur), would-be heir to Chingiz Khan, attempted to revive the declining Mongol empire, while during the same period the expanding Ottoman empire managed to establish itself in the Balkans and would eventually take Constantinople in 1453.

Troubling as the external Ottoman threat in particular was, fourteenth-century Latin Christendom faced even greater problems within its own boundaries, as the location of Friar John's papal head should recall. Officially headquartered in Avignon since 1309, the beginning of the so-called Babylonian Captivity, the Church had been growing increasingly divided internally, and would openly split apart in the Great Schism of 1378, dividing the European powers into pro-Roman and pro-Avignonese camps until 1417. One of the consequences of this division was increasing agitation for reform, which prompted a repressive and often violent counter-reaction from the Church, as in the early fifteenth-century crusade against the Hussites. And Latin Christendom's internal problems were by no means exclusively religious; they were also political, social, and economic. During the 1330s, for instance, England and France drifted into a war that would last long enough to become known (conservatively) as the Hundred Years War, while virtually everywhere throughout western Europe mercenary companies were doing good business in local wars. In addition, the European economy was in a bad way for most of the century, there were a number of serious famines, and the Black Death swept through Christendom in and after 1348, devastating the population and leaving in its wake social disarray and labor unrest that issued in popular uprisings like the Jacquerie in northern France in 1358 and the English Peasants' Revolt in 1381.

Such, then, was the world in which *The Book* first circulated and in which it achieved the remarkable early success attested to by the nearly 300 manuscripts still extant. Yet even as that world began to wane, *The Book* continued to be popular. Not only did it make the potentially epochal passage from script to print in eight languages before 1515, reaching some sixty printings by 1600; it has also lived on in several languages since then (Czech, Dutch, English, and German). Indeed, among the many medieval books that have come down to us, few have been as persistently successful, or as consistently praised and maligned, as *The Book of John Mandeville*. For more than six hundred years now it has continued to attract one generation of readers after another, surviving the dismantling not only of its conceptual and geographical worlds in the sixteenth century, but also of its textual and authorial integrity in the nineteenth.¹⁴

Long considered a monument to England's greatest medieval traveler—"our Countriman," as Samuel Purchas called him in 1625, "that famous Traveller Sir John Mandevile, whose Geographie Ortelius commendeth, howsoever he acknowledgeth his Worke stuffed with Fables"—*The Book* has since the mid-sixteenth century been subject to varied assessments of its nature and quality, and these views have only become more widely, even wildly, divergent in the last one hundred and fifty years. By the same token, the famous English traveler himself has increasingly become the subject of radically contradictory judgments. Some of these more recent re-evaluations are, to be sure, a consequence of *The Book's* "multiplicity of writing," which "Purchas his partial praise" already notices in the phrases quoted above.¹⁵ But most of them have come in response to the disconcerting nineteenth-century discovery that the text is a "fraud" and the author a "mendacious" missing person.

For Sir John Mandeville's book is not what it professes to be: a selective memoir set down by an English knight in his gouty retirement at the end of thirty-four years of journeying as a pious pilgrim, freelance soldier, and curious traveler through Asia and northern Africa. It is rather a compilation of others' writings, many of them by genuine travelers to the East, put together by someone who may never have traveled anywhere (except to a good library) and whose true identity has proved as difficult to find as Prester John's marvelous Christian kingdom. Hence my decision to refer to him as the *Mandeville*-author and to distinguish him from his textual stand-in, Sir John. *The Book's* author may well have been an Englishman called John Mandeville, and he may even have been a knight, but the work's chivalric guide is not a real person; he is a textual fiction written into others' writings and sometimes depicted as doing their deeds. The author is not so much dead, then, as deeply and probably irretrievably encrypted.¹⁶

The two main sources of the unlocated author's compilation were the German Dominican William of Boldensele's *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* [Book of certain overseas regions] (1336), a tidy and detailed narrative of its author's pilgrimage to Egypt and the Holy Land, and Friar Odoric of Pordenone's *Relatio* (1330), a dictated account of wonders seen and heard about during the friar's decade-long missionary wanderings in India and China. Both of these books were translated into French in 1351 by Jean le Long of Ypres, monk of Saint-Bertin at Saint Omer,¹⁷ and the *Mandeville*-author made more frequent use of Jean's somewhat modified translations than he did of their Latin originals, deliberately overwriting the two translated memoirs.

According to Christiane Deluz's recent study, the *Mandeville*-author also made extensive use of nearly two dozen other texts and consulted about another dozen in highly selective fashion.¹⁸ This latter group, which includes such basic medieval authorities as Josephus, Orosius, Macrobius, and Isidore of Seville, consists almost exclusively of encyclopedias and histories, whereas the former group represents a much wider range of writing: other pilgrimage and travel writings (John of Würzburg, *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* [c. 1165]; Thietmar, *Peregrinatio* [1214]); historical works (Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis* [early 13th century]; Hayton, *Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient* [1307]); encyclopedias (Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, *Speculum naturale* [c. 1256–59]; Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor* [1260s]); religious writings (the Bible; Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* [before 1267]; William of Tripoli, *Tractatus de statu Saracenorum* [1273]); literary works that many medieval readers considered historical (*Littera Presbyteris Johannis* [late 12th century]; *Roman d'Alexandre* [mid-12th century]); and a single scientific treatise (Johannes de Sacrobosco's *De sphaera* [c. 1220]).

By itself the foregoing list reveals little more about *The Book* as a book than a list of ingredients would reveal about a bouillabaisse as a soup, and it remains to be seen what sort of textual and geographical world the *Mandeville*-author shaped from his borrowed words. Nevertheless, a few general remarks can be made here. While, as their titles suggest, most of the sources began life in Latin, the author typically consulted them in French translation, turning to the Latin only intermittently. Whatever this might say about his command of Latin (which Deluz thinks "assez incertain"), and hence about his possible identity (which she thinks to be that of a young nobleman educated in the Arts), it is an important fact.¹⁹ Apart from confirming the French exordium's claim that the text will offer material in "Romance" that could have been set down in Latin, the author's way of working links him with those who sought to enlarge the domain of the vernacular by adapting into it the concerns of Latin learning: translators and compilers such as Brunetto Latini, Jean le

Long, and John Trevisa, for example, and authors such as Philippe de Mézières, Christine de Pizan, and John Gower, all of whom furthered the growth of a significant lay culture whose concerns were as wide as the medieval world itself.

No less important than their language is the nature of the sources that the *Mandeville*-author chose to draw upon. With the possible exception of the Alexander romance and the letter of Prester John, they are all serious works that no Nun's Priest could have mocked by saying that they are "also trewe, I undertake, / As is the book of Launcelot de Lake"; and their seriousness normally survives the author's handling of them, although, as we shall see, he sometimes has Sir John play the storyteller who stands at an uncertain distance from the truth claims of his current tale—if not quite with the aplomb of Chaucer's deceptively naïve narrators.²⁰ In addition, since several of the sources were effectively out of date by the time the *Mandeville*-author drew on them, it is fair to say that his characteristic mode of compilation is conservative in the literal sense, and the resulting text has its fair share of medieval confusion and anachronism.

In both his strengths and his weaknesses, then, the *Mandeville*-author is a typical medieval compiler. Like Chaucer with Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, he leans heavily on his principal sources, yet handles them with the freedom of an author who has his own designs on what others have written. The most important of those designs is signaled by his use of two "Filostratos," which he spliced together one after the other to produce the basic outline and underlying formal structure of his book. In thus basing his book on William's and Odoric's, the *Mandeville*-author clearly chose well, and not simply because they were among the most recent and reliable "Orientalist" writings available at the time. Since each is mostly a descriptive report organized around the narrative of an individual journey, and since Odoric's report effectively begins where William's leaves off, the two could be quite neatly fused into a single, more or less coherent textual and geographical world, while the resulting composite itinerary could itself be supplemented at every turn with material drawn from other sources. Furthermore, since modern Alexanders like Polo and Odoric were already familiar to medieval audiences, the *Mandeville*-author's extended and supplemented itinerary could even be "truthfully"—that is, plausibly—presented as a kind of memoir based on the journeys of a single, remarkable traveler.

So plausible was this composite text that its ontic metamorphosis from personal memoir to unacknowledged compilation, and of Sir John Mandeville from English traveler to untraceable and possibly foreign compiler, has, as noted, occasioned not a little confusion and dissension. In general, schol-

ars and critics have reacted to the double transformation by advancing either literal-minded and negative views of text and author, or literary-minded and positive ones.

Consequently, a book that Ortelius once commended for its geography has more recently been condemned by some as a “mendacious romance” and promoted by others as a “sincere work of art,” while an author whom John Bale once praised as “another Ulysses” has been reduced to a “marvel-monger” or redeemed as an “artist . . . ‘ahead of his time’.” In addition, *The Book* has been read since the 1880s as the work of a philosophical fabulist who was “a perfect latitudinarian”; as “an anti-Papal pamphlet in disguise”; as “a popular encyclopaedia”; as an “antipodal” satire; as “a rich index of a new sensibility, a new feeling about the world” that reveals medieval pilgrimage giving way to renaissance exploration; as the first “realistic prose fiction . . . since Petronius”; as “the First book of Geography” (an “*Image du Monde*”); and as a marvelous renunciation of worldly possession in the form of “a hymn to mobility.”²¹

There is much to be said for all of these readings—indeed, even the one really reductive account (the “anti-Papal pamphlet” theory) contains a suggestive *aperçu* into *The Book*’s critique of Christendom—and I, like others, have benefited from them. Yet even the best of these accounts seem me to be somewhat monological, refusing *The Book* and its unlocated author their sometimes unsettling contradictions, or attempting to resolve them into some kind of higher unity. In my view, the reading that most allows *The Book* its Walt Whitman-like complexities (it is large, and it contains multitudes) is Donald R. Howard’s “The World of Mandeville’s Travels” (1971), a fine essay which notices both the “worklike” and the “documentary” elements of *The Book*. According to Howard, the *Mandeville*-author is not so much a liar or an artist as a “scholar,” and one attempting “to write a new kind of work, a summa of travel lore which (a) combined the authority of learned books and guidebooks with the eyewitness manner of pilgrim and travel writers; (b) combined the pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the missionary or mercantile voyage into the Orient; and (c) combined the curious and vicarious intentions of some such works with the thoughtful and devotional intentions of others.”²²

Insightful as it is, Howard’s concisely comprehensive description nevertheless passes over the most striking thing about *The Book* as a book—its discursive and generic variety—and it emphasizes *The Book*’s summational quality at the expense of its revisionary and dialogic character. As I read it, *The Book* represents not simply a gathering up of existing travel lore, but a deliberately dialogic response to previous and contemporary writings about the East. This

is, I think, an important and generally overlooked point, and one that makes it possible to avoid debates over “life” versus “art,” or “fraud” versus “fiction,” in order to listen to *The Book* as a particularly effective voice in the centuries-long medieval conversation about the nature and limits of the world.

In addition, it is a point that can clear the way to a revised understanding of source study as a step toward giving *The Book* a renewed hearing. Traditionally, source study has viewed the relation between a given text and its sources as an uncomplicated matter of one-way transmission—as either creative transformation or outright theft—but understood dialogically, this relation can be seen for what it usually was: a form of intertextual dialogue. “Books,” as Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One’s Own*, “continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately,” and revisionary recombination constitutes the most important form of the discontinuous textual continuity that is characteristic of medieval culture. *The Book*’s recent readers have rightly been dissatisfied with their precursors’ pursuit of verbal borrowings, since that pursuit was meant to sift the stolen from the experienced, yet they have inadvertently limited the results of their own investigations by ignoring the knowledge which that undertaking has turned up about the text’s complex relation to even its principal sources.²³

In addition to rehabilitating source study as the exploration of cultural conversation, there is another advantage to regarding *The Book*’s relation to its sources as deliberately dialogic: it puts the term “plagiarism” into a properly historical context. With a nod to their Victorian forebears, both Mary B. Campbell and Stephen Greenblatt have described *The Book* as “plagiarized.” They are in some sense right to do so, of course, yet their use of the term can be as limiting as it is illuminating, since it evokes anachronistic notions of intellectual property, copyright, and romantic creativity, making it easier to overlook *The Book*’s typicality as a compilation and to ignore the fact that compilation was a basic medieval mode of original research and “creation.” While plagiarism was indeed occasionally recognized in the medieval period, it was not defined, as Mary Carruthers has pointed out, by the use *as such* of inherited materials, whether ideas or words; rather, it consisted in the *lazy* use of them, the failure to make them one’s own, and so would have been considered a failure of invention and memory, not “a matter of theft.”²⁴

By this standard, the *Mandeville*-author is not a plagiarist, for *The Book* is not a mindless compilation; it is rather the product of a considered, engaged, and sometimes inspired overwriting of its sources that offers readers an often compelling account of matters pious and profane, historical and scientific, mundane and marvelous. It may also offer them a critical response to Polo’s prior and widely circulated *Divisament*, which is conspicuously absent

from the list of *The Book's* sources. If, as some critics have argued, *The Book* can be read as extending pious pilgrimage in the direction of Polo's curious exploration, it can likewise be regarded as placing the marvelous East depicted by Polo (and others) under the sign of Christian History—and the two views need not be mutually exclusive. Every text, after all, and especially one as omnivorous as *The Book*, represents a kind of field where asynchronous or contradictory cultural forces and elements manifest themselves, and where critical analysis will detect a mixture of the residual, dominant, and emergent elements of a given cultural formation.²⁵

The product of synthetic "scholarship," *The Book* in my view represents a new kind of work that attempts to entertain, instruct, persuade, chastise, challenge, and console its imagined audience by providing an even more comprehensive and "theologically correct" vernacular account of the world than Polo had done half a century earlier—which makes the *Mandeville*-author an entertainer, teacher, moralist, and geographer, as well as a trickster and an artist. By way of providing this description, it extends the territorial reach of Polo's select ethno-geography and natural history to cover northern Africa and Asia from Constantinople to the Earthly Paradise, and it combines this extended work with a guide for genuine and vicarious pilgrims to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Dispersed throughout this novel combination, moreover, are various, as it were, smaller works, such that *The Book* is not just two books at once, but several: a piece of intermittent crusading propaganda; an occasional satire on the religious practices of Latin Christians; an implicit treatise on right rule in both the Christian and the non-Christian worlds (a kind of mirror for Christian princes); a proof of the earth's sphericity, the existence of inhabited antipodes, and the possibility of circumnavigation; a demonstration that most non-Christians have a "natural" knowledge of the One, True God; a framed collection of tales and diversities, both exemplary and entertaining; and the desultory memoirs—the travel lies, in fact—of a "verray, parfit gentil" English Knight Errant.²⁶

Neither the "sincere work of art" praised by some of its defenders, then, nor simply the "mendacious romance" of its detractors, *The Book* comes to us rather as a puzzling and telling document of the medieval past: a memorial artifact recording not the literal eastern travels of an English knight, but the lettered explorations of a mental traveler through the known and imagined world of his day. As such, and whatever its aesthetic value or its deceptions, *The Book* is as deserving of sustained critical attention as other medieval documents and artifacts that give expression to the worldly aspirations of medieval Christian culture. It is the medieval past, after all, which, "along with classical antiquity, has played a major role, perhaps, through symbolic inversion,

the major role, in creating the modern [Euro-american] consciousness of the past" as such. "It has functioned as an historical memory for an entire civilization, and, like all memory, it has recorded many things which we prefer not to have recalled."²⁷ Whatever else it is, as a dialogic summa of lore about the East, *The Book* is an especially articulate trace of this mixed historical memory, and thus a representative witness to Latin Christendom's actual and imagined relations with other cultures—relations whose legacy includes, among other and better things, the long history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and the world-historical confusions connected with the word "Indian."

The Task of Criticism

No single study could hope to investigate and comment on all of the stories that might be told by means of this at once exemplary and extraordinary book, and there is none that has even attempted such a utopian task. The present study is no exception, but it does attempt more than any previous account of *The Book of John Mandeville*. It does this in three ways. In the first place, it makes *The Book* as a whole the object of sustained critical attention and commentary, rather than, say, treating it as the occasion for solving a scholarly problem (authorship, sources, textual history) or as an episode in a larger story (European travel writing, the marvelous, geographical thought), essential as these studies are to our understanding of the work. In addition, the present study assumes that there is more to *The Book* than fraud or fiction, and it thus attempts to take account of the multiplicity and the alterity of medieval writing as they manifest themselves in a text of interest to scholarly readers in a variety of disciplines. Finally, and what is most important, the present study assumes that this multifaceted textual object is itself multiple rather than single: that is, it takes seriously *The Book's* existence and widespread circulation not simply in a number of different languages, but also in several different forms, all of which in principle have a claim to critical attention.

Like Polo's *Divisament*, and unlike more obviously literary or historical writings, *The Book of John Mandeville* has rarely been the object of sustained critical attention, particularly of a sort concerned with the text's interpenetrating discursive, rhetorical, formal, thematic, and ideological elements and strategies. These matters have mainly been touched on in the brief compass offered by essays and chapters, both of which are necessarily selective in their emphases. In addition, the few longer studies that have been undertaken, excellent though they generally are, have rarely concerned themselves with *The Book* as a book in the formal sense: as a "mechanical device for bringing an en-

tire artistic [or discursive] structure under the interpretive control of a single person.” Rather, they have focused on the “routine orthodox questions of medieval scholarship”: authorship, origins, sources, genre, and textual, reception, or intellectual history.²⁸

No doubt there are several reasons why *The Book*’s reception has taken this bifurcated course since the mid-nineteenth century, but the most important has to do with its relative literary limitations. Most of its length is given over to retailing information and anecdotes about far countries, and its author has taken more trouble to gather this material than to present it in a pleasing and compelling literary form—except at the level of the paragraph or the page. The author almost always improves on his sources, yet many readers are likely to feel that an unbridled taste for curious matter has overwhelmed his ability to shape his work, as was the case with Chaucer’s Squire in his romance of “this Tartre Cambyuskan.”²⁹ Set beside the best late medieval writings, *The Book* reveals itself as a composition of uneven quality and interest. Alongside compelling descriptions and anecdotes there are uninspired stretches of information, so the text can be hard going in places. In an age when the best vernacular authors were working in accomplished verse, the *Mandeville*-author chose to write prose, and the prose he wrote is more a vehicle for information than a literary end in itself, more *Gebrauchs-* than *Kunstprosa*.

Given as much, and despite the implications of the brief but illuminating literary readings offered by Bennett, Campbell, Greenblatt, Howard, and Zacher, critics have assumed that the text as a whole is unlikely to repay close study. To adapt a claim made by Northrop Frye, they seem to believe that “the critic will find soon, and constantly,” that other writings are “more rewarding and suggestive . . . to work with” than *The Book*. That certainly is the point of the judgment expressed in J. A. W. Bennett’s recent survey of Middle English literature. Bennett’s account of *The Book* is generally approving, but his comment on its interest as a verbal composition is typical: “The English texts are simply plain renderings (sometimes misrenderings) of the French, diversions from the original being slight. . . . The versions have a place in the history of English prose style only because they show that English had made little progress in this kind of writing since the accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan’s voyages were set down in Alfred’s time. It is not the style but the tone and content of Mandeville’s book that gave it an immediate appeal.”³⁰

If this claim is true of the English versions, which were made when English prose was still finding its nonmetrical feet, it must be even truer of the original French. Not only were *The Book*’s most important sources French translations of Latin texts, which thus had behind them the most accomplished prose tradition in western Europe, but by the mid fourteenth cen-

ture French prose itself was heir to a developing tradition on which writers everywhere could draw for inspiration and models. So extensive was this tradition that its influence, like that of Latin, reached deep into other linguistic spheres, as the thirteenth-century examples of Brunetto Latini and Marco Polo/Rustichello of Pisa show.

The assumptions underlying both Frye's and Bennett's pronouncements—that a text's making and manner are worthy of interest insofar as they are distinctive or “literary,” and that the effects and appeal of a text's tone and content are separable from its style and form—are certainly defensible, and Frye's position in particular has until recently underpinned literary study and textual analysis. Yet Frye has also argued “that all structures in words are partly rhetorical, and hence literary, and that the notion of a scientific or philosophical verbal structure free of rhetorical elements is an illusion”—an argument that led him to speculate on expanding the “literary universe . . . into a verbal universe,” in which “no aesthetic principle of self-containment will work” as a guide to which texts might repay close analysis. If Frye's argument is right, and recent discourse studies suggest that it is, then neglecting to study *The Book's* discursive, rhetorical, formal, and thematic elements and strategies because they are not “literary” enough—or studying them only in their aesthetic aspects—is to remain ignorant of how and to what extent these things do joint aesthetic, conceptual, and ideological work.³¹

No text is ever simply given; it is always construed and constructed in the act of reading, and every reading depends as much on the features and “signals” of the text itself as it does on the expectations, knowledge, and responses of individual readers, who are social and historical as well as linguistic and psychological beings. In the case of *The Book*, we are looking at a particularly well circulated and worldly example of vernacular prose: an example, that is, of a “signifying practice” that was still emerging in the mid-fourteenth century, still in the process of defining its relations to associated signifying practices such as Latin prose or vernacular verse. Among other things, the rise of vernacular prose was vital to the increasingly widespread transmission of information in the expanding literate society of late medieval and early modern Europe as well as being central to the rise of modern conceptions of history.³²

In paying close attention to *The Book* as a book, then, I aim to reveal what the detailed workings of an ordinary medieval prose text can tell us not only about itself and its maker—for example, that the ordinary prose often conceals a subtle rhetorician, a minor master of the self-contained paragraph or page—but also about the culture in which it was produced and reproduced: for example, that most of the work's medieval intermediaries were resistant to

its most excessive anti-Jewishness while being open to its own rationalizing openness to religious Otherness.

Surprisingly, even the critical reader's first and most obvious task, "to understand . . . how the text was and is made," has scarcely been undertaken. Those readers who have been interested in questions of authorship, origins, sources, or textual and reception history have shown little interest in the implications of their work for the critical reading of *The Book*, and literary critics have followed suit. In the present study, therefore, I attempt to bring a tradition of neglected scholarship to bear on my reading of *The Book*, examining the matter, making, manner, and remaking of the text. In so doing, I regard the text not "as a static block," but "as a dynamic field . . . of words," a temporally unfolding and plural verbal domain characterized by "a certain range of reference" and affiliations, "partly potential, partly actual: to the author" and his intermediaries, "to the reader" and the projected listening audience, "to a historical situation, to other texts, to the past and present." In Edward Said's view (which I have adapted here), the critic ideally undertakes this most basic task by "mim[ing] or repeat[ing] the text in its extension from beginning to whole, not unlike Pierre Menard."³³ Unlike Borges's writing reader or Said's ideal critic, though, I pursue my critical miming in a more discontinuous way, in part because I read *The Book* against the shifting textual ground of its sources and congeners, and in part because I am interested in the workings of its verbal world both in themselves and, synecdochically, as the historically specific signs of one culture's attempts to apprehend the world, itself, and others.

Intratextual Multiplicity and Topological Reading

Traditionally, criticism has concerned itself with authorial or "authoritative" texts, and the readings of *The Book* produced since the mid nineteenth century have been no exception. Yet the fact is, the authorial text of *The Book of John Mandeville*—if we can assume that it was released just once and in finished form, and is more or less faithfully represented in the Continental and Insular Versions—was only one of several renderings in circulation. Consequently, for a critic interested, as I am, in *The Book* as a cultural phenomenon and a multi-textual commonplace, there is every reason to argue that there is no necessarily "authoritative" text.

In a decidedly untrivial sense, *The Book* is the product of more than one person, almost as if it were "one of the anonymous productions of the race

rather than the effort of a single mind" (as Virginia Woolf wrote of *Robinson Crusoe*, though I would prefer the word "culture" to "race").³⁴ Not only is it a compilation and as such partly the work of those earlier authors that the *Mandeville*-author chose to overwrite; it is also partly the work of those medieval intermediaries who did not reproduce the text as they received it. Apart from the trivial variations introduced by predictable slips of the eye, ear, and hand, the extant multilingual manuscripts of *The Book*, like those of Polo's *Divisament*, contain numerous changes in the form of omissions, interpolations, and rearrangements made by translators and redactors with their own designs on *The Book*.

In fact, some intermediaries even acted as though they were equal in authority to the author himself, and they rarely marked their interventions. Many of their changes thus go well beyond the "emendations" thought to be required for the "authoring" of a text, a medieval practice alluded to in the original prologue when the newly emerged "I John Mandeville, Knight" asks readers to correct any errors in his account of the East, as well as at the end of Michel Velser's German rendering when the translator finds himself stumped by a Latin term and invites others to supply the correct German word: "The illness is called *podagra* [gout] in Latin. (I do not know what it is called in German; whether one calls it *den tropffen* [dropsy], I do not know; if anyone happens to know it, he should set it down in the book.)."³⁵

The Book of John Mandeville, then, is the sort of text C. S. Lewis had in mind when, in pressing the case for a "criticism . . . of books, not of authors," he drew attention to the "shared authorship" of many medieval writings. Arguing that "what we may call 'the Author-Book unit' will not always work" in the study of medieval texts, Lewis began "to doubt whether even the Book is the unit," since in some cases it can be "hard to say where one Book ends and another begins." As Michel Foucault has put it, "the book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands," since its "frontiers . . . are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. And this network of references is not the same in the case of a mathematical treatise, a textual commentary, a historical account, and an episode in a novel cycle."³⁶

In the case of a heterogeneric compilation like *The Book*, the network of references is especially complex, and not simply because the text is a compilation, but also because it is itself a multinodal network, a kind of rhizome, so to speak, whose French "radical" gave rise to a discontinuous series of related offshoots in several languages, each of which can vary in title, first lines, inter-

nal configuration, and last full stop while being *The Book* itself to its readers. Originally and generically several books at once, *The Book of John Mandeville* is textually multiple as well, characterized both by its typically medieval intertextuality and by its own distinctive *intratextual* multiplicity.

Distinguished as it is by this medieval multitextuality, by its *mouvance*, or continuous recreation in transmission, *The Book* has circulated for some six hundred years not as a single timeless object—which is how many of us were schooled to think of texts—but rather as variant versions of a postulated original. In my view, the very existence of these multiple versions raises two fundamental questions that students of *The Book* have so far ignored or answered by default, echoing Chaucer's Parson: "I am nat textueel; / I take but the sentence, trusteth weel."³⁷ The questions are, what to read, and how?

Scholars have been vaguely aware of *The Book's* plural existence since the sixteenth century, when John Bale wrote a brief biographical notice of "John Mandeville" and Richard Hakluyt edited the Vulgate Latin text for his *Principall Navigations* (first edition, 1589), and more specifically so since 1840, when Carl Schönborn showed how different three versions in German, Latin, and English could be. Yet from Emile Montégut's 1889 essay on "Sir John Maundeville" as a philosophical fabulist to Greenblatt's 1991 reading of *The Book* as a hymn to wonderful wandering, literary critics have proceeded as though the results of textual scholarship had no bearing on their work. Virtually every one of these critics has read the same text—the Middle English translation known as the Cotton Version—and regarded it as authoritative, sometimes even while drawing attention to *The Book's* textual multiplicity.³⁸

There is no one answer to either of the questions raised by *The Book's* intratextual multiplicity. It is possible, for instance, to treat *The Book* as a single work that is well served by choosing a "best text" and reading it as authorial, as Chaucer critics do with the Ellesmere text of the *Canterbury Tales*. This is what Bennett, Campbell, Deluz, Greenblatt, Howard, Montégut, and Zacher have all done. The result is a kind of "diplomatic" reading, attentive to the text of the original French in one of its surviving forms (Deluz), or in a relatively faithful translation like the English Cotton Version (the others). Another way to answer the question, though, would be to examine a specific translation or redaction that departs in various ways from the presumed original, comparing the two versions in order to read the adapted rendering as a work in its own right rather than as a regrettable falling away from an ideal original—which is what Ridder has partly done in his study of Otto von Diemeringen's German Version.³⁹ A third way, more informative if also more difficult, would be to read two or more related versions of *The Book* with reference to their immediate sources (whether or not these include the original

French text), treating each as a specific response to a particular received text. The result would be a kind of diachronic reading, tracing the text's transformations through time, space, and languages.

Still another method, even more interesting and more fruitful, would be to read several versions at once, recognizing the place of each in the complex network of transmission centered on the French versions and seizing the opportunity to read against the grain of habit. The result would be a palimpsestic or topological reading, expanding "the Author-Book unit" to a multi-author/multi-text "unit" and, like the diachronic reading, confirming George Steiner's claim that "intellectual history, the history of genres, [and] the realities of a literary or philosophic tradition" are all "inseparable from the business of translation" broadly defined.⁴⁰

It is mainly this fourth route that I follow in the present study, although it is no simple task to do so, since it involves reading like a Menardian incarnation of the Stephen Leacock character who tries to ride off in several directions at once, and it is complicated by the fact that I am also tracing the *Mandeville*-author's prior overwriting of his own principal sources. My choice of texts and versions throughout includes the main and most widely circulated versions, but has also been determined by the availability of editions and the extent of my own interests, training, and linguistic competence. At the center of the topological reading stand the Continental and Insular Versions in French, which preserve the best traces of the presumed original, while the other texts examined include the Bodley, Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Metrical Versions in English, Michel Velser's and Otto von Diemerigen's Versions in German, and the Vulgate Latin Version.

The textual histories and specific interrelations of these and still other versions are described elsewhere,⁴¹ but it will be helpful to summarize the most important similarities and differences among the versions examined in the present study (the basic arrangement of the mandevillean multi-text can be seen in Figure 1, while further information about the individual versions is given in Table 1).

If the extant manuscripts are any guide, *The Book* was known to medieval audiences above all in four languages (French, English, German, and Latin) and in two major variants, which might be called "Original" and "Ogier"—the latter characterized especially by a series of interpolations about the Carolingian hero Ogier the Dane, and differing more among themselves than do any of the "Original" variants. In addition, the two major variants were most widely known in the form of some six individual renderings—the Continental, Insular, Defective, and Velser Versions, on the "Original" hand, and the von Diemerigen and Vulgate Latin Versions, on the "Ogier"—of which

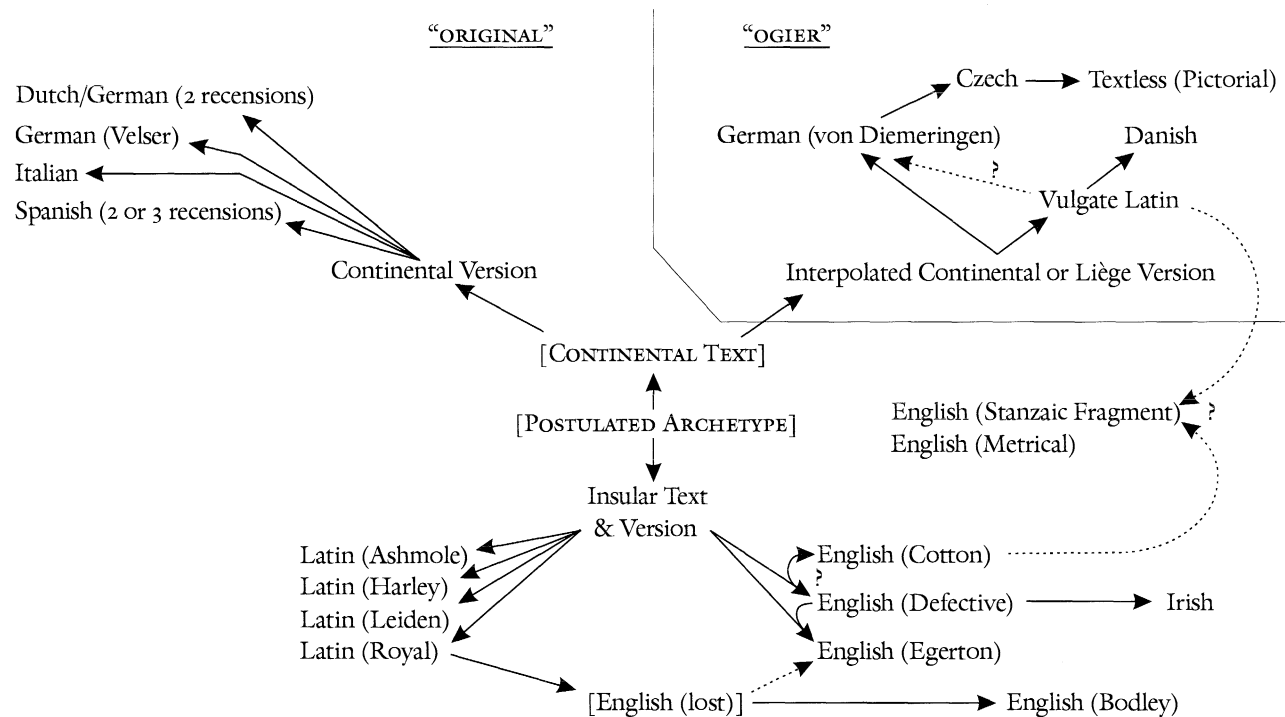


FIGURE 1. The Transmission of *The Book of John Mandeville*.

TABLE 1. The Versions of *The Book of John Mandeville*^a

<i>Language and version</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Number of extant mss^b</i>	<i>Author or translator</i>	<i>Date and place of composition</i>
French		c. 60 (total)	John Mandeville?	c. 1360
Continental	Archetype	31 or 32		c. 1360
Liège	Continental	7	Jean d'Outremeuse?	c. 1390, Liège?
Insular	Continental	21 or 22		before 1390, England?
Czech	von Diemeringen	7 ^c	Vavřinec of Březov	c. 1398–c.1419, Prague?
Danish	Vulgate Latin	4	Peder Hare?	1444?, Roskilde
English		c. 44 (total)		
Bodley	Royal Latin	2		c. 1390–c.1450
Cotton	Insular	1		c. 1400?
Defective	Insular	c. 38	c. 1400?	
Egerton	Defective, Insular, Lost	1		c.1400–c.1430
Metrical	?	1		fifteenth century
Stanzaic Fragment	?	1		fifteenth century?
Dutch/German		103 (total) ^d		
Anonymous Dutch	Continental?	1		c. 1400?
Anon. Dutch/German	Continental	16		late fourteenth century?
von Diemeringen	Liège (& Vulgate Latin?)	45	Otto von Diemeringen	mid 1390s?, Metz?
Velser	Continental	40	Michel Velser	c.1393–c.1399, n. Italy?
Irish	Defective	3	Fingin O'Mahony	
Italian	Continental	c. 13		
Latin		54 (total)		
Vulgate	Liège	41		after 1396
Ashmole	Insular	1		
Harley	Insular	1		
Leiden	Insular	4		before 1390

Royal	Insular	7	before 1400?
Spanish ^c		1 (total)	
Aragonese	Continental	1	toward 1400?
Castilian	Vulgate Latin?	none	
Textless (Pictorial)	Czech	1	early fifteenth century? Prague?

a. The information recorded here derives from the various scholarly editions listed in the Works Cited, as well as the studies by Bennett, De Poerck, Ganser, Hanna, Ridder, and Seymour. Fuller documentation is available in my study, "The One and the Many: A Critical Synopsis of Scholarship on the Authorship and Versions of *The Book of John Mandeville*," which I hope to publish as an appendix to an annotated anthology (in preparation) of the *The Book's* reception between c. 1375 and c. 1900.

b. The number of manuscripts includes fragments and excerpts.

c. There are also three other manuscripts copied from printed texts.

d. This total includes one as-yet-unclassified manuscript.

e. Apparently, there was also a Catalan Version, of which only a bibliographical reference remains.

the Continental and Insular Versions best represent the *Mandeville*-author's own work.

In its peripatetic unfolding as a descriptive itinerary for would-be travelers, *The Book's* composite textual and geographical world in the two "authorial" versions extends from Constantinople to the Earthly Paradise. This is also the organization of their German and English renderings, allowing for the "Egypt gap" in the Defective Version (the loss of about a quire of text in the tour of Egypt) and excepting altogether the Bodley and Metrical Versions: the Bodley redaction sufficiently abridges the text to change the nature of its world, emphasizing the marvelous anecdotes, while the Metrical rendering consistently adds, deletes, and rearranges material—for example, taking readers on an introductory tour of the marvels of Rome—even as it paraphrases the prose into verse. Of the Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Velser Versions, only the last makes any changes to the disposition of *The Book's* material, to what scholastic commentators called the *forma tractatus* (form of the treatise), and it does so sparingly, toward the latter part of the text, mainly following the minor dislocations of the translator's source manuscript.⁴²

The changes in these four translations are all local, as it were, the result of intermittent interventions by their makers. The Cotton Version's adaptations, for instance, are infrequent and minor, making the rendering quite a good proxy for the authorial version, and much the same could be said of the Defective Version, were it not for the numerous lacunae (in addition to the Egypt gap) riddling the text. The related Egerton Version stands somewhat apart from these two renderings in that it often tidies up the local disposition of material and renders it in a more supple, often periphrastic northern English prose that is a pleasure to read. Like the other English translators and redactors, the Egerton maker is anonymous, but he may have been a cleric, since he sometimes cites learned sources (Virgil, Isidore of Seville, specific books of the Bible) and toward the end he interpolates a story about the salvation of Ultima Thule by St. Thomas of Canterbury. In contrast to the Egerton redactor, whose penchant for tidying up the text he shares to a lesser degree, Michel Velser occasionally identifies himself while intervening, explicitly attempting to enhance the credibility of his text with personal testimony: for example, in the account of Sir John's faith-trying passage through an infernal valley.

Of the two widely circulated and distinctive renderings made from the Interpolated Continental or Liège Version, Otto von Diemeringen's resembles the above-mentioned translations mostly in the manner and matter of the text, whereas the Vulgate Latin Version resembles them largely in its overall shape. The von Diemeringen rendering, for example, tends to make only local changes on any given page—most notably at the beginning, where it

omits the *Mandeville*-author's homiletic exordium, offering instead a lengthy description of the work's contents framed by an elaborate justification of the translator's labors. But it radically reshapes *The Book* by displacing the roughly central account of the Saracens, along with some of the scattered observations on other religions, to the very end of the text, where the resulting short treatise on religious diversity becomes the fifth part of the translator's newly created five-book structure.

In contrast, the Vulgate Latin redaction generally retains the *forma tractatus* common to the three French versions but considerably revises the text's style and content. It not only overwrites both the exordium and the epilogue, in part to create a more pious Sir John; it also turns the cumulative manner of the *Mandeville*-author's prose into a periodic style, and reduces the text's length by about one third, achieving its greater concision both by paraphrase and by curtailing or omitting specific remarks, stories, and some of the Ogier references. Since it consistently gathers together related material that is scattered about in the other renderings, the abbreviated Latin text is even tidier in its disposition at the local level than the Egerton Version. Where it differs from the latter—as indeed from all other renderings—is in its silent reversal of many of *The Book*'s claims (for example, that Jerusalem is located at the world's center) and in its stiffening of religious attitudes to such an extent that the originally openminded Sir John here becomes a fierce advocate of Catholic orthodoxy and a sharp critic of pagan blindness.

The Latin redactor's transformation of the English Knight into a staunch *defensor fidei* is not, however, entirely out of keeping with the *Mandeville*-author's initial presentation of him. As chapter 2 shows, even before "I John Mandeville" emerges in the Continental and Insular Versions, the exordium's propagandistic tenor makes it easy to imagine him as just such a pious figure; and, as chapter 3 reveals, it remains possible to do so until about the end of *The Book*'s visit to Constantinople, where after having presented the Jews as Christ-killers, the authorial Sir John provides a fairly neutral sketch of what Greek Christians profess and practice, using the account to offer passing criticism of the state of the Church in Latin Christendom as well as to begin moving toward an almost anthropological view of religious and cultural difference.

The specific concerns of my extended topological reading are suggested by the titles and section titles of each chapter, but it may be helpful to provide a brief outline of the study as a whole. Chapter 2 inaugurates my reading by offering an especially detailed analysis of *The Book*'s exordium, analyzing the way in which it calls text, author, and audience into being and thus shapes

initial expectations about the textual world into which one is entering. By offering at the outset such a close reading of such a short space of text, I aim to demonstrate how much we can learn if we pay attention to the rhetorical and ideological workings of an ordinary vernacular composition, and how much significant variation there can be in *The Book's* isotopes, or variously weighted versions—which contain the most substantial evidence of reception before the nineteenth century, revealing that many of its earliest “rewriters” read the text with an actively critical eye.

In somewhat less detail, chapter 8 concludes the reading with an analysis of the ways in which the multi-text eases its audience out of its several related worlds by attempting, among other things, to reauthenticate the English Knight's survey of eastern diversities. The Continental and Insular Versions, for example, stand on Sir John's eyewitness authority alone, but the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions, along with one Insular Latin manuscript, have Sir John get his book approved by the pope, while the Liège and Vulgate Latin Versions have him explain how a chance encounter in Liège with a physician he had known in Egypt led to the composition of his book.

Between these two very close readings of *The Book's* textual frame (which do not look at the further frames created by manuscript *incipits* and *explicitis* or *The Book's* placement alongside other writings in individual codices), I examine the ways in which the *Mandeville*-author overwrites his two main sources, as well as the ways in which the resulting compilation is rendered. Thus, chapters 3 and 4 trace the transformation of William of Boldensele's *Liber* at the hands of the author and his intermediaries, while chapters 5, 6, and 7 (and part of chapter 8) do the same for Odoric of Pordenone's *Relatio*. Since the *Mandeville*-author handles the *Relatio* with even more freedom than he does the *Liber*, chapters 6 and 7 sometimes look briefly at his use of other sources as well, and they likewise touch on a subject that deserves separate study: the Ogier passages in the Liège, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin Versions.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a slightly longer space of text than is chapter 2, but the passage discussed there—the tour of Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean—is still relatively short; it is important because it can be considered a microcosm of the whole work, introducing both its principal concerns, which range from religious difference to telling tall tales, and its characteristic textual strategies, which include turning borrowed descriptions into compelling narratives, moralizing, and forcing readers to decide how much credit they will give to *The Book's* claims. Chapter 4 examines *The Book's* distinctive mix of piety and wonder in its tour of the biblical East (Egypt and the Holy Land), where we see Sir John in his role as guide and *histor*, particularly in his encounter with the Saracens, who are depicted as easy targets for Chris-

tian conversion and as models of devotion: the *Mandeville*-author's concern with Christian reform and its relation to the (re-)expansion of Christendom is especially notable here.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 follow *The Book* into Ynde, Cathay, and Prester John's Land. Since the matter of cultural and religious diversity dominates the text's passage through these regions, my reading throughout analyzes the rhetorical strategies and ideological aims of its generally sympathetic portrayal of even the most radically different beliefs and practices, while drawing attention to the one striking exception to that sympathy: the depiction of the Jews. In particular, these three chapters look at the ways in which the *Mandeville*-author uses the marvelous East as a critical (if itself flawed) mirror of Christendom, as well as at the ways in which the isotopes variously endorse or resist the specular portraits. Thus in chapter 5, after examining the transition from the biblical to the marvelous East, which is made so as to signal the continuity of the text's concerns and attitudes, I look at the *Mandeville*-author's depiction of the earth as a symmetrical sphere marked by the asymmetry of Christian topography (a center in Jerusalem and a beginning in the Earthly Paradise)—the spatial conception that underwrites his account of the East and which some isotopes (particularly the Vulgate Latin) resist. Chapter 6 takes up the issue of faith and power, especially in relation to Christian expansion, as it is reflected in the portraits of the Khan's and Prester John's realms and in two briefer accounts that are placed in the westward excursus between those two imperial portraits: a miracle that shows how God defends Christian piety against all worldly powers and a bizarre account of the "Jews" of Gog and Magog as the allies of Antichrist. Piety's power is also the subject of chapter 7, but the focus here is on both the personal, as we watch Sir John survive a terrifying journey because of his increased devotion, and the pagan, as the author uses the legend of Alexander's encounter with Dindimus to claim that God loves all who serve him devoutly, regardless of faith—a claim that some isotopes reject.

Here Begins the Book of John Mandeville, Knight

LIKE MANY MEDIEVAL WRITINGS INTENT on establishing their claim to serious attention, *The Book of John Mandeville* opens with a formal expository prologue in virtually every textual isotope. Even more than the epilogue, whose task is to draw matters to a close, the exordium occupies a privileged space in the text, where it serves to call into being not only the text itself, but also the author and the audience. For whatever their historical reality, both author and audience also come to exist—are “actualized”—in any reading as byproducts of the text, which works to define them and itself by creating certain expectations about the work as a whole and by suggesting what sorts of cultural memory, knowledge, and attitudes are required to grasp its unfolding verbal world. Accordingly, the guidance given by the exordium is crucial to the direction that the process of actualization takes thereafter.¹ In the Continental and Insular Versions, moreover, this guidance is particularly interesting, because the exordium is almost the only place in the entire text where we can see the encrypted *Mandeville*-author at work in his own words—rather than on someone else’s. By the same token, the guidance is equally interesting in *The Book*’s isotopes, since the exordium is one of the few places where every intermediary makes significant changes to the text, variously attempting to enhance, adapt, or resist the author’s way of framing the subsequent account.

In the two French versions that lie at the center of my reading, the exordium calls text, author, and audience into being through a highly wrought combination of piety and propaganda, according to the basic principles of Ciceronian rhetoric: “to make us attentive, receptive to [the text’s] teaching, and well disposed,” while giving a foretaste of its teaching.² The exordium opens by playing on the emotional attachment every fourteenth-century Christian would have had to both the Holy Land and Jesus’s role in Salvation History, thus defining its audience above all as a religious community. Once having done so, it then presents *The Book* as a guide for pilgrims to the Holy Land that will also provide them and armchair travelers alike with an

account of the diverse lands beyond Palestine, while claiming that this expansive tour of the East is based on the remembered experience and knowledge of one John Mandeville, Knight, of St. Albans.

Of the eight isotopes examined in this study, half transmit this exordium in its basic authorial form and half overwrite it in their own way. Yet, as suggested above, even those renderings that follow their source's lead make some notable changes to the text. The Velser Version, for example, introduces the guiding "I" right from the start, whereas the Continental and Insular Versions wait until the community of "nous Cristiens" has been fully defined before having Sir John speak *in propria persona*, as it were. The Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions, in contrast, maintain this crucial transition from the first-person plural to the singular, but the latter two neglect to present themselves as translations, as if to suggest that they are the *Mandeville*-author's original, while the Cotton text makes Sir John himself the Englisher. The more substantially reworked Vulgate Latin Version likewise neglects to present itself as a translation, and it also conceals the fact that its rendering is a periphrastic abridgement of the whole work.

Against these authorized versions, so to speak, one can set the radical redactions made by other intermediaries. The Bodley Version, for example, compresses the lengthy authorial exordium into a brief statement about *The Book's* main subjects, while omitting to note that, like the Vulgate Latin, its text is an abridged translation. In contrast, Otto von Diemeringen's Version, after advertising itself as a translation and summarizing the contents in great detail, celebrates travel and travelers in a passage that could almost be an eighteenth-century advertisement for the Grand Tour. Fingin O'Mahony's Irish Version—which is discussed in this chapter only—also presents itself as a translation, but whereas von Diemeringen claims to have worked from Latin and French, his Gaelic counterpart names four languages: English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. While adding languages, O'Mahony deletes text, omitting the *Mandeville*-author's initial orchestration of piety and propaganda in order to define the work as a pilgrim's guide and book of marvels. Yet another redaction that emphasizes wonders rather than piety and propaganda is the English Metrical Version, the only rendering to acknowledge that it provides an edited version of the English Knight's worldly "memoir."

The Parts of the Whole

Seen as a whole, the authorial exordium falls into two related parts. The first, the *captatio benevolentiae*, is composed of three smaller sections that look ahead to some of *The Book's* concerns and begin constituting its implied audi-

ence. Having presumably captured the actual audience's attention and good will with the very first words of the opening paeon to the Holy Land and Jesus Christ, this initial part then exhorts Christians to worship and serve their Lord and their overseas territorial "inheritance," before concluding with a brief critique of the ruling estate, whose members are said to prefer fighting among themselves to leading the commons on a new crusade. In this tripartite movement from praise through exhortation to critique, the prose gradually changes. Its initial manner is cumulative and repetitive, interweaving description, narration, and exposition so as to amplify the text's opening matter and appeal to the audience more through their hearts than their heads. This stylistic and emotional expansiveness diminishes somewhat, however, as the text reaches the moral critique, where the loosely cascading yet controlled syntax and heightened feeling of the opening begin to modulate into the plain style and matter-of-fact address characteristic of *The Book* as a whole.

The exordium's second part, which looks a bit like the standard rhetorical *partitio*, or statement of the text's divisions and plan, turns away from the critique to introduce Sir John, gesturing in its now more direct style toward the book's subject, intentions, order, and utility. Specifically, and here using for the first time the English Knight's first-person voice, the text promises a description (meant especially for intending pilgrims) of Jerusalem, the holy places nearby, and the way there, followed by another account (meant for no one group in particular) of places even farther east that are notable for their diversity of peoples, laws, and customs. Whatever it might turn out to be, then, *The Book* initially projects itself as an expository discourse intended to instruct, inform, and please pilgrims and armchair travelers interested in biblical and ethnogeographical material.

In creating this complex of expectations, the exordium's second part continues the task of constituting *The Book's* audience, but explicitly now, and adds to it the perhaps more important task of constituting its ostensible author. It does so by drawing attention to *The Book's* nature as a vernacular work composed for "everyone" by a far-traveled knight expert in traditional as well as outlandish matters. Having thus established Sir John as a "long-distance specialist"—someone whose knowledge would make him an important figure in a traditional society—working on behalf of the larger Christian community, the exordium closes with a conventional reminder of his limitations and the standard request that his errors and omissions be repaired by those who recognize them.³

Since the primary aims of the authorial exordium are the rhetorical ones mentioned above, it is fitting that it begins with a slow and solemn sentence devoted to the biblical place, persons, and events whose existence underwrote the medieval understanding of the world. Acre may have fallen to the Mam-

luks in 1291, and with it the remaining Latin Christian settlements in Palestine, but the deep emotions raised by the Crusades were hardly a dim memory when *The Book* began to circulate circa 1360, and the *Mandeville*-author clearly seeks to benefit from them:

Come il ensi soit qe la terre doutre mer, cest assauoir la Terre Seinte, qe homme dit la terre de promission, vltre [entre] totes altres terres soit la pluis excellente et la pluis digne et dame et soueraigne de touz altres terres, et soit benoite et seintefie et consacree dul precious corps et du sang nostre seignur Ihesu Crist; en la quelle terre il ly plesoit soy enombrer en la virgine Marie. . . .⁴

Since it is so that the land beyond the sea, that is to say the Holy Land, which one calls the land of promise, beyond [among] all other lands is the most excellent and the most worthy and lady and sovereign of all other lands, and is blessed and sanctified and consecrated by the precious body and blood of our lord Jesus Christ; in which land it pleased him to become human in the virgin Mary. . . .

It is probably not this emotional appeal, however, that most strikes modern readers here. If anything, they are more likely to notice the abrupt shift in syntax that follows the reference to Jesus, since it may leave them wondering where the expansive text is taking them. Indeed, with the mention of Mary, the exordium does not return to its inaugural praise of the Holy Land, but moves on through a series of sentences about the life, works, and suffering of her son in Palestine, and these only carry the text further away from the syntax of the initial clauses, which hang there incomplete as the discourse continues.

As it happens, this grammatical waywardness occurs once again in the exordium, and it is no less striking, since it comes in the sentence that marks the shift from the first to the second part of the opening, which names *The Book*'s author and defines its aims:

Et purceo qil y ad long temps qil neust passage general outre meer et plusours gentz se delitent en oyer parler de la dite seint terre et en ount solaz, ieo Johan Maundeuille, chiualer, ia soit ceo qe ieo ne soie dignes, neez et norriz Dengleterre de la ville Seint Alban, qi y passay la meer. . . .⁵

And because it has been a long time since there was a general passage overseas and many people enjoy hearing the said holy land spoken of and take pleasure therein, I John Mandeville, knight, though I am not worthy, born and raised in England in the city of Saint Albans, who there crossed the sea. . . .

For Mary B. Campbell, these "two long, unfinished sentences . . . hint at" the usual reasons for writing an account of the Holy Land, but "drift to

an end without delivering.” In her view, “the dependent clauses become so enthusiastic and thus so long that they end at last without result clauses.” She suggests two reasons for this syntactic drift toward inconclusion: either the *Mandeville*-author, “intoxicated with his *amplificationes*, forg[ot] about the claims of grammar and sense,” or he found in the rhetorical conventions of the exordium the “perfect opportunities for a quasi-parodic abandonment of sense.” As a persuasive advocate of the author’s literary abilities, Campbell understandably favors the latter explanation, attributing “these deliriously collapsed sentences” to his “artfulness.”⁶

The two sentences are indeed grammatically incomplete, and as such they are typical of medieval writing, which often contains phrases and clauses tacked together so as to produce more or less coherent meaning without producing syntactic integrity. According to one scholar, such frequent anacolouthon stems from a “disregard for the structure of the whole,” but that seems not to be so in the *Mandeville*-author’s exordium.⁷ Here at least it is possible to regard the two “collapsed sentences” differently, as elements of a larger formal and semantic unit. Viewed thus, they no longer look problematically unfinished, but reveal themselves as a rhetorically effective structural device that twice suspends the argument’s forward movement to develop it laterally before completing the larger unit. In this instance, the larger unit is the authorial exordium itself, which consists of a single sentence-like utterance (apart from the concluding modesty *topos*). Stripped of its amplifying flesh, the text reveals its syntactic skeleton at a glance: *since x and because y, I, who have done z, shall do z*’. In its actual articulation, though, the sentence-like utterance is not quite so simple, since it too contains a striking anacolouthon:

Come il ensi soit qe la terre doutre mer . . . soit la pluis excellente . . .
Et purceo qil y ad long temps qil neust passage general outre meer . . .
ieo Johan Maundeuille . . .
qi y passay la meer . . . et ay veu et enuironne meint pays . . .
—des quelles terres et isles ieo parleray pluis pleignerement. . . .⁸

Since it is so that the land overseas . . . is the most excellent . . .
And because it has been a long time since there was a general passage overseas . . .
I John Mandeville . . .
who crossed the sea . . . and have seen and traversed many countries . . .
—of which lands and isles I shall speak more fully. . . .

Seen as a whole, then, the *Mandeville*-author’s introductory utterance takes a slightly more complex form (*since x and because y, I, who have done z—of which I shall speak*), and the syntactic incompleteness turns out to be a subtle rhetori-

cal device: it requires one to keep attending to a text that medieval audiences would have found emotionally compelling until, in the utterance's completion, they are offered the double temptation of informed talk about piety and diversities. What medieval person could have resisted that?

Setting the Stage

Unlike the beginnings of canonical medieval texts, *The Book's* exordium is little known, and I want to follow up this overview with a more detailed consideration of its workings. Here are the opening words again, but quoted now so as to reveal the cumulative movement of both the prose and the argument—for unlike those of verse, which can sometimes be seen on the page itself, the interpenetrating syntactic and semantic rhythms of oratorical prose are easier for the restless reading eye to miss:

Come il ensi soit

qe la terre doutre mer,

cest assauoir la Terre Seinte,

qe homme dit la terre de promission,

vltre [entre] totes altres terres

soit la pluis excellente et la pluis digne et dame et soueraigne

de touz altres terres,

et soit benoite et seintefie et consacree

dul precious corps et du sang nostre seignur Ihesu Crist. . . .

Such elaborately articulated sentiments were always useful at the beginning of a medieval text, and this particular display of piety would likely have captured the good will and attention of those encountering *The Book* in its first two centuries. Yet as suggested above, the *Mandeville*-author's opening words do more than rehearse pious sentiments to gain approving attention. They also begin establishing the work's main concerns and attitudes, attempting to set the terms whereby the whole is to be understood. Accordingly, the exordium immediately strikes a thematic note that will reverberate throughout the entire text: a concern with the relation between territory and Christian history, or, more generally, with the earthly *place* of Christianity, the extent of Latin Christendom. It can hardly be by chance that "land" is the first word to have more than a syntactic function, or that it is sounded again and again in the exordium's first part, or that the syntax works not simply to emphasize the term, but to define and redefine it. This protracted redefinition is especially notable in the syntactic sequence quoted above, which unfolds as a tricolon

crescendo, followed by a diapason of qualifying adjectives and nouns, all of them adding layers of meaning to the word “land.”

The initial layer of meaning is clearly geographical, added by the phrase “oultre mer” (that is, across the Mediterranean)—which is to say that *The Book* opens by announcing its concern with “there” in relation to “here,” and not simply with the nature of place, but also with orientation in space. In fact, “oultre mer” is only the first of many simple locative expressions—such as “occident,” “orient,” “nostre pais,” “en cez parties” and “la terre des Cristiens”—that crop up on every page. A concern with spatial orientation is to be expected in a text about far countries, of course, but it is still worthy of attention, since conceptions of space—which are often linked with those of time—are functions of more than empirical data and pragmatic considerations; they are also shaped by belief, desire, and systems of knowledge.⁹

Having begun by locating the unnamed land in geographical space, the exordium proceeds to place it in relation to “universal” time with the next two definitions. The first of these, by referring to the land as “seinte,” or holy, invokes the most important binary opposition in medieval culture—sacred versus profane—and uses it to situate the land overseas relative to both biblical and recent Christian history. This move from physical description to spiritual evaluation thus symbolically collapses the spatial distance only just established between the land “there” and the audience “here,” implying that memory transcends geography. With the second temporal definition (the third and climactic element of the opening tricolon crescendo), the exordium extends and reinforces the symbolic collapse of space into time so as to connect the absent land and the present audience. By using the rare phrase “terre de promission,” or land of promise (a calque on the Latin “terra promissionis”), the text invokes the teleological Christian conception of history, reminding its audience that their future fortunes are connected with the distant land. However odd it sounds, “land of promise” is a felicitous phrase, since “promise” is semantically rich in conjunction with “holy.” All three of its basic meanings—the act of promising, the thing promised, and expectation—resonate in *The Book’s* opening words: in feudal as well as Christian terms the land overseas is understood as the place promised (and briefly possessed) in the past, to be given (again) in the future—if Christians serve their Lord properly—and so to be hoped for in the present. It is these last two meanings especially that *The Book* develops, using them to criticize the state of Christendom.

Immediately after this tricolonic definition of the land overseas comes one that places it in relation to all other lands while virtually personifying it: “vltre [entre] totes autres terres soit la pluís excellente et la pluís digne et dame et soueraigne de touz autres terres.” The subject of the opening clause

("terre") now governs a verb, a simple copular ("soit"), linking the place and its attributes in a doubly static relation: that is, in an unchanging relation of state, nicely marked in the French by the present subjunctive.

The trope by which land here becomes female is a familiar one after the Middle Ages, whether in travel or other writings. John Donne's "Love's Progress" is a more than typical example, since its "witty" reversal of the trope—making the female body an exotic world to be explored by the male lover—shows how familiar it was by the seventeenth century. Such familiarity, though, should not obscure the specificity of its use in *The Book's* exordium, where the land's gender evokes moral, social, and political rather than erotic qualities. Excellent and worthy, the land is not simply female, but a lady and a sovereign. It is even possible, given the following references to Jesus and Mary, that the land is being indirectly characterized as the Mother of God, thus making it virgin land—if not quite in the sense familiar from exploration and colonialist discourses. Significantly, this is the only place in *The Book* where land is characterized as female, and several versions (the Bodley, Defective, Egerton, Velsor, and Vulgate Latin) omit it, perhaps because their makers thought it inappropriate, distracting, or incomprehensible.

In the authorial exordium, though, the trope has an obvious function: to prepare medieval audiences to respond appropriately when, in the next section of this first part, they are reminded that the polysemous overseas land is now in the possession of misbelievers and—a striking term—foreigners ("des estranges").¹⁰ All medieval men, after all, had an obligation to respect and protect noble women, while all Christians had an obligation to venerate the Blessed Virgin and protect, respect, and venerate their ruler. The way to do these things here would be to displace the unwanted suitor and drive out the usurper: to repossess the land. This is exactly what the exordium suggests, even if the subsequent critique of the ruling estate implies that such a venture would have been impossible. Despite its different valence, then, the trope works as it will in later writings.

Having expanded the original geographical definition of Palestine to include sacred history and specific moral, social, and political qualities, the text sums up its opening syntactic movement by depicting an event that medieval audiences viewed as unique and ever-recurring: God's self-sacrifice. This singular event is shown here as a series of actions that priests repeated every day—blessing, sanctifying, and consecrating through contact with God's dying body ("benoite et seintefie et consacree dul precious corps et du sang nostre seigneur Ihesu Crist")—and that thus further characterize the promise of the Holy Land. The land is again represented as sacred, but now metonymically as a kind of eucharistic host, which, even more than ladies and sovereigns,

was to be snatched from the hands of misbelievers and returned to those worthy to receive it: hence the subsequent critique, both in the exordium and throughout the text, of the state of Christendom.

Piety and Propaganda

With this allusion to the Passion, the authorial exordium interrupts its opening syntactic movement and the cumulative definition of the land, and the focus shifts from geography to Jesus—or rather, splits to include both place and person. For while Jesus becomes the grammatical subject of a series of sentences recounting his birth, life, and death, “terre” continues to be sounded, sometimes as the location and sometimes as the object of the activities attributed to Jesus. The anacolouthon, moreover, is not simply a rhetorical device, but part of a move made frequently in *The Book*, wherein description and exposition give way to—or more precisely, occur by way of—narration, a move grounded in a long tradition of geography, which saw place as the site of memorable historical events, rather than as a physical location on the earth’s surface. Brief though it is, and well known as the story was to medieval audiences, the exordium’s account of Jesus in Palestine offers a fine example of a medieval author reworking inherited material to his own ends: in this case, to anticipate some of *The Book*’s main concerns as well as to establish the attitude required for a reading on the text’s terms.

The account begins by turning from the land to the life, briefly and selectively retracing the events from Jesus’s birth to his final suffering (but not his death), and implicitly reminding the audience of something they already know: who is to receive the promise of the promised land. Here is the first part of the expository narrative, quoted, as before, so as to reveal visually the rhythms of both the prose and the argument:

en la quelle terre il ly plesoit
 soy enombrer en la virgine Marie
 et char humaine prendre et noricion,
 et la dite terre marcher et enuironer de ses benureez piez. —
 Et ou il voleit
 meint miracle faire
 et precher et enseigner la foy et la ley de nous Cristiens,
 come a ses enfantz;
 et ou il veolt
 meint reproche et meinte mokerie porter et soeffrer pur nous.¹¹

in which land it pleased him
 to make himself human in the virgin Mary
 and to take human flesh and nourishment,
 and to walk and encompass the said land on his blessed feet—
 and there he would
 perform many miracles
 and preach and teach the faith and law of us Christians,
 as to his children,
 and there he would
 endure and suffer many reproaches and much scorn for us.

The narrative pauses at this climactic moment, and returns to Jesus's life, defining still more fully the link between person and place. In the same elaborate, oratorical prose, the text insists on Jesus's desire, though he was king of all creation, to be called king of "that land alone" ("celle terre singulièrement"), "saying I am King of the Jews" ("en disant *Rex sum Iudeorum*"). And what stirred this desire was the land's geographical centrality (a point theologized in one manuscript by the change of "cueors" to "corps"): "for it is the heart [body] and the middle of all the land of the world" ("qar ceo est li cueors [luy corps] et ly my lieux de tote la terre de monde"). Having defined the connection between Palestine and Jesus, the narrative picks up where it left off, recounting the final events of the King's life "in that very worthy land" ("en celle tres digne terre") and linking his fate with those of both Adam and every Christian in a concise synopsis of Salvation History that takes a passing hit at "the cruel [dog] Jews" ("[I]es cruelles [chiens] Iuys") who insulted Jesus.¹²

Seen as a whole, then, the account of Jesus in Palestine advances in three stages, the third resuming the argument of the first such that both of them frame the second. Each stage, and thus the whole as well, is characterized by the same sort of syntactic, formal, and thematic arrangement. This arrangement is at once recursive and cumulative, and resembles nothing so much as those musical techniques of variation, in which "a ground motif anchors the ornamental variations taking place above it. . . . [and] recurs throughout, as if to demonstrate its staying power and its capacity for endless elaboration."¹³ As the first quotation suggests, it is the references to the land that give the passage its syntactic ground, each new variation being introduced by a similar recursive phrase: "en la quelle terre . . . et ou . . . et ou . . . et de celle terre . . . et celle terre . . . en celle terre." Only the most inattentive audience could get lost in such a passage.

Also recursive are the subject and predicate following each reference to place, and it is notable that the predicates all have to do with volition, with

the subject's express will, which *The Book* occasionally exhorts the audience to obey or imitate: "il ly plesoit . . . il voleit . . . il veolt . . . [il] veolt . . . il auoit eslite . . . veot le Roiz."¹⁴ Added to each repeated phrase is a series of details, usually in the form of infinitive verb phrases, as though to conjure up the actions as recurring in the eternal present of the text: "soy enombrer . . . prendre . . . marcher et enuironer," and so on. What the exordium does, then, is to recount Jesus's life in the simplest narrative form as a sequence of unique, yet ever-recurring actions: "and then . . . and then . . . and then"—which here takes the form "and there . . . and there . . . and there."

This basic syntactic and structural arrangement is obviously calculated not only to capture the attention and good will of medieval audiences, but also to secure their assent to *The Book's* attitudes toward its as yet barely defined subject matter. The strategy by which it attempts to accomplish the latter aim is particularly noteworthy, since it involves the common (but not therefore trivial) medieval practice of linking beginnings with origins: specifically, the beginning of the text with the origin of the civilization in which it was produced and disseminated and with which it is ultimately concerned—a gesture that both conceals and reveals the arbitrariness of textual beginnings. We can see this clearly in the authorial exordium, where a humanly produced beginning attempts to derive its power and authority from a meditation on divine origins, a distant place, and both the past and the present, in order to clarify and define the present and the future.¹⁵

But those are *The Book's* ultimate intentions; its initial intentions are rhetorical: to move its audience in a fashion neither aesthetic nor hypothetical, as is supposed to be the distinctive feature of literary texts. The exordium, like *The Book* as a whole, has the sort of overt designs on its audience which locate it within "that extensive suburb of prose," as Frye calls it, "concerned with the technique of social or oratorical persuasion." In particular, the exordium resembles those pamphlets and speeches that seize on a critical moment of history and come at it in a repetitive and anaphoric prose intended either to give voice to the emotions surrounding the moment or to prompt action; in the case of the latter, the prose rhythms are heightened toward the "hypnotic and incantatory," in order to channel feeling, thought, and action in one direction only. The exordium's prose is not quite so wrought, but it is moving in that direction, and as it does it follows "the dialectic of rhetoric" by having both "a rallying point" and "a point of attack."¹⁶

The rallying point, as we have seen, is a double one: a place and a person. The point of attack is still to come, and it too is double: the misbelievers who possess the land and the Christian rulers who allow such mispossession to continue by being divided among themselves. Before it reaches this point,

though, the exordium returns to the rallying point, elaborating the two most prominent themes of its first part: the importance of the Holy Land's central geographical location and the role of divine love in redeeming an undeserving and sinful humanity: "And well would the King of glory in that place more than in any other land suffer death and passion. . . . Therefore the Creator [king] of all the world would suffer death for us in Jerusalem . . ." ("Et bien veolt le Roi de gloire en celuy lieu plus qen vn altre terre mort et passion soiffer. . . . Auxi le Creour [rois] de tot le monde veolt mort soffrir pur nous a Ierusalem . . .").¹⁷

In elaborating still further this relation between the local and the "universal," the exordium heightens the emotive quality of the patterned prose until, finally, it culminates in an apparently spontaneous, but actually calculated exclamation: "Ah God, what love he had toward his subjects, when he, who was guiltless, would suffer death for the guilty" ("Ha, dieu! quel amour il auoit enuers ses subgitz, quant il, qestoit sanz culpes, voleit mort soffrir pur les coupables!"). With this outburst, which interrupts its forward movement, the exordium reaches the rhetorical "point of attack," and as it does, the homiletic discourse shifts from narration to exhortation, the repetition recurring briefly ("Bien doit homme [Well ought one]. . . . Bien doit . . . la terre [Well ought the land]") so as to emphasize the audience's obligation toward their Lord and his land:

Pur quoi chescun bon Cristien qi poair en ad et de quoi, se *deueroit* pener et mettre en grant trauail de nostre suisdit et droit heritage conquere et mettre fors des mayns de mescreantz et del aproppier a nous. Qar nous sumes appelez Cristiens de Crist, qest nostre piere; et, si nous sumes droitz filz de Dieu, nous deuons heritage qe notre piere nous ad lesse chalenger et houser de mayns des estranges.¹⁸

Wherefore every good Christian who has strength and the wherewithal *ought* to trouble himself and labor hard to conquer our above-mentioned and right inheritance and take it out of the hands of misbelievers and repossess it for ourselves. For we are called Christians from Christ, who is our father; and if we are the true sons of God, we ought to claim the inheritance that our father left us and oust it from the hands of the foreigners.

Having thus exhorted the audience and defined one enemy, the prose does not build as before, but again shifts direction, turning sharply from exhortation to critique to define the other enemy: the "terrestrial lords" ("seignurs terriens") whose "pride, avarice, and envy" ("orgoil couetise et enuye") have them fighting over land within Christendom and leaving the willing commons shepherdless ("sanz pastour"). Yet hardly has it done this,

when it turns once again, toward prophecy now, leaving off the elaborate repetitions and concluding the exordium's first part with a truncated echo of the opening phrases:

Mes sil plesoit a nostre seint piere lapostoille [le pape], qar a Dieu plerroit il bien, qe les princes terrienx fuissent a bon acorde et ouesqe ascuns de lour comune voisissent emprendre la seint viage doutre meer, ieo quide estre bien certain qen brief terme serroit la terre de promission reconcilie et mise en mayns des droitz heirs filz Ihesu Crist.¹⁹

But if it please our holy father the apostle [the pope], for it would please God well, that the terrestrial princes come to an agreement and with some of their commons undertake the holy voyage overseas, I believe it to be certain that the land of promise will shortly be returned and placed in the hands of the true heirs [the] sons of Jesus Christ.

It is no accident that the exordium's first part, having begun with an elaborate definition of the "land of promise," should arrive at this prophetic conclusion, and I want to consider the rhetorical strategy according to which the entire passage is constructed. First, though, I want to look at its subject matter, which in the larger context of *The Book* is more than just conventional. For in devoting the space it does to defining not only the promise, but also the maker and recipients of that promise, the passage anticipates several of *The Book's* concerns while also constituting its audience in a highly specific way.

Despite its brevity, the exordium's account of Jesus in the Holy Land depicts him in a number of roles: as holy sacrifice, lord, human and mortal, miracle worker, preacher, teacher, and law-giver, founding father, king, the second Adam and redeemer of a sinful humanity, and model to be imitated. Only passing mention is later made of most of these roles, but *The Book* finds many examples of God's miraculous powers at work in the world and takes every opportunity to teach and preach on God's behalf, sometimes in unexpected ways. In contrast, God's sacrifice and suffering humanity receive somewhat more attention in the exordium and less in the rest of the text, where only two passages return to the theme in a significant way: the account of the relics of the Passion in Constantinople, and the depiction of the Indian juggernaut, where the audience is told that many non-Christians willingly suffer more for their gods than most Christians for Christ.

As in the two later passages, the emphasis on Jesus's humanity is obviously intended to draw the audience into the text by drawing them out emotionally. But only so far. While similar to other late medieval representations, *The Book's* few depictions of the Man of Sorrows, especially in the exordium, are muted in tone and sparing of the sorts of detail used to provoke an all-

consuming response. There is nothing in the text like Julian of Norwich's focus on the dying flesh of the crucified Christ, or the Limbourg brothers' depiction of his dead and broken body in their paintings of the Deposition and the Entombment in the *Très Riches Heures*.²⁰

It is easy to see why the exordium (and *The Book* as a whole) refuses to dwell on Jesus's sufferings: it is not primarily a devotional text. It contains devotional elements, to be sure, but these are not the heart of its matter; they are simply part of what is needed to keep the audience in the right frame of mind, and to remind them of the event that underwrites their understanding of the world. In the exordium especially, the emphasis is on sacrificial suffering as a form of exchange, not self-immolation, and thus as an activity directed toward rather than away from the world. If Jesus gave his body out of love to redeem Christian souls, the text asserts, Christians should return that love by giving their own bodies and goods to redeem the Holy Land, which, I have suggested, is metonymically God's body—although in order to do this they need first to set their own house in order, since it too is God's body, and no less abused by sinful Christians than the Holy Land is by “misbelievers.”

Of Jesus' roles in the authorial exordium, the most important is that of lord and king. Even more than the almost Gothic representation of the Man of Sorrows, the slightly backward-looking Romanesque depiction of Christ the King looks ahead to two of *The Book*'s central concerns: right rule and God's rule.²¹ Although the exordium offers only a brief critique of the behavior of Christian lords, the rest of the book devotes considerable space to depicting good and bad governance, especially in the apparently ideal realms of the Great Khan and Prester John—a double concern recalling that of a text that appears five times in the same codex as the Defective Version: *Piers Plowman*.²² As lord and king, Jesus is depicted in the exordium as ruling over both a specific place and all creation. This has implications for “his children,” since it makes them heirs not simply to the Holy Land (a commonplace in defense of crusading in the East), but to the world, a view advanced several times in *The Book*.

Here already, then, one can see the signs of something that must have accounted for much of *The Book*'s early appeal: its dual nature as a consolation and a challenge to Latin Christians. In its authorial form, such as we have it, *The Book* seeks to console its audience for the loss of one territorial possession by offering them a compensating vision of universal dominion, challenging them with the same vision to reform themselves.²³

Nous Cristiens and We English

Thus we come to the recipients of God's promise: "nous Cristiens." Like "terre," "nous" (with its adjectival forms "nostre" and "nos") is sounded again and again in the authorial exordium's first part. In contrast, "ieo" ("I") occurs only once, and that at the very end, marking the transition to the second part, where Sir John emerges. The homiletic exordium, in other words, does not initially present itself as the discourse of an "I" addressing a "you" (plural), and particularly not an "I" which, like that of Chaucer's narrator in *Troilus and Criseyde*, sets itself outside the circle of projected auditors. Indeed, *The Book's* guiding "I" clearly places himself among his addressees, constituting them as a religious community: the community defined by the "new" covenant with God.

Such a definition requires a community of the "old" covenant, of course, and the exordium mentions them twice. The first reference is fairly neutral, confirming the proprietary relation between the land overseas and God's first chosen people; but the second is sharper, the adjective "cruel" recalling the view of Jews as Christ-killers. No other religious community, in fact, is so badly served in *The Book* as the Jews, who inhabit only the past and the future, and are depicted with a hostility verging on paranoia. Even the "misbelievers" (the Saracens) who appear in the exordium as the enemy of the day never meet with the same hatred; instead, like other religious communities, they are shown following the best light they have—normally a simulacrum of the Christian light, which makes its replacement by the latter all the easier to imagine.

In any case, the point is that *The Book's* audience is defined as a religious community. Such a move ensures that it will appeal to the widest possible audience, and do so on grounds that potentially unite them. This is quite a different strategy from the one used in Polo's book, which opens by addressing its audience along class lines: "Lords emperor and kings, dukes and marquises, counts, knights and city-dwellers, and all people."²⁴ No less than the here/there opposition, the us/them opposition invoked in *The Book's* opening looks ahead to many of its concerns, and these are above all religious. Much of what appears in the text, as well as much of its presentation, is shaped by religious categories of thought. Since these are not necessarily the categories governing the selection or presentation of material in travel writings after Columbus—where notions of nation, race, and civility or savagery become increasingly prominent—and since these are not the categories by which most modern readers of *The Book* order the world, it is easy to miss or underestimate

them. And yet it is crucial to recognize them, for despite the authorial exordium's religious certainty, the text as a whole often attempts both to maintain and to collapse the binary theological oppositions of its world, and sometimes to reverse them as well—in the manner of Montaigne's "Des cannibals."

Another reason why it is important to recognize the way in which *The Book* initially constitutes its audience has to do with the "Mandeville question." Although purportedly composed by an Englishman, *The Book* makes no significant use of Sir John's "national identity," rather offering a Latin Christian's view of the world. The Knight's Englishness is thus a fact almost without relevance to a reading of the text. Paradoxically, however, *The Book's* ostensibly English authorship has been a part of its reception since John Bale in 1548 called Sir John "another Ulysses." Even the American Josephine Bennett, whose 1954 study set a new standard for Mandevillean scholarship, advanced the English national interest in her account, dedicating her labors "to restor[ing] the *Travels* to its rightful place in English literature. . . . [for] when it is recognised that its author was, after all, an Englishman, born and bred, so far as we know, at St. Albans, the *Travels* will surely find the editors it needs."²⁵

So it was that "nous Cristiens" became "we English," and so it was that the authorial exordium's most important rhetorical moves came to be overlooked by generations of readers. Considered rhetorically and given the troubled world in which *The Book* first circulated, the movement from praise through exhortation to critique and prophecy is cunningly planned. The text opens with a geographical panegyric and a divine eulogy, directing attention away from the local and the contingent toward the "universal" and the eternal, stirring up the strong medieval emotions surrounding the *fons et origo* of Christianity, and attempting to create a sense of solidarity with its audience. This opening move makes all the easier the immediately following attempt to reinforce that solidarity as it were negatively, by evoking a perceived, external threat, just as it makes the exhortation to attack the "misbelievers" all the more forceful, for the text now has only to redirect the original emotional response negatively and outward.

Yet having done this, the authorial exordium does not stop here; it does not present itself to the world as one more tributary to the fourteenth-century torrent of crusading propaganda. Somewhat unexpectedly, the exhortation gives way to critique, and the critique redirects the reinforced emotions negatively and inward, counting on the goodwill built up so far to make the self-criticism more effective—or failing that, counting on the utopian hope held out by the following prophecy of restored origins for social and political reformation. As it happens, this sort of move whereby the text suddenly turns

on both itself and its audience, transforming a monovalent (though polysemous) account into something more ambivalent, occurs frequently in *The Book*, and may account for its recent popularity with literary critics.

Revisionary Readers

No less than it does now, *The Book's* early popularity did not depend on a passive acceptance of its concerns and rhetorical strategies. Readers adapt and resist as well as accept, and the result is a "complex game of positions" "between text and readership" that begins as soon as they encounter one another.²⁶ With *The Book* this game was also played as the text passed through the hands of its intermediaries, most of whom reworked the exordium according to principles implicit in the results. In general, there were two kinds of reworking: selective changes, or a radical overwriting. The former (examined below) can be found in the Egerton and Velsler Versions, for example, and perhaps in the more reworked Vulgate Latin, while the latter (discussed later in "Radical Redactions") occur in the Bodley, Metrical, Irish, and von Diemeringen Versions.

In keeping with its manner of rendering the Insular Version as a whole, the Egerton Version makes several small changes that alter the "feel" of the text, starting with the opening tricolon crescendo, whose elements it reorders so that the most familiar English term, the Holy Land, comes last. More notable, however, is the way in which it reworks the depiction of Jesus as king. Where the authorial exordium makes him king of all creation and the Jews, the English text makes him king of the former only, characterizing Jesus's qualities as a ruler in biblical terms (and turning the French sentence around so that the syntax emphasizes the person above the place): "And he þat was King of heuen and of erthe . . . wald be called all anely king of þat land, as þe prophete saise, *Noli timere, filia Syon: ecce, rex tuus venit tibi mansuetus*, þat es to say, 'þou doghter of Syon, drede þou noȝt; for, lo, þi kyng commes to þe, dulye mylde and meke' [John 12:15; Matt. 21:5]." Clearly, the translator was concerned more with God as a model of right rule than with recalling the facts that Jesus was a Jew and that the Jews once possessed the land overseas, although even the Cotton translator dropped the mention of Jewish possession (as the Defective translator did not) while keeping the phrase "*Rex sum Iudeorum*" that the Egerton maker elaborately replaced.²⁷

In contrast, all three English versions omit the word "cruelles" (or "chiens") from the reference to the Jews in the following synopsis of Salvation History, the Egerton text shifting the attention away from Jesus entirely and removing the references to Jesus's love and Hell's pains. Thus the words

“and be insulted by the cruel [dog] Jews and suffer his passion and death for love of us, in order to redeem and deliver us from the pains of hell and of terrible perpetual death” (“et estre ledengez des cruelles [chiens] Iuys et passion et mort soeffrer pur lamour de nous, et pur nous rechanger et deliuerer des peines denfern et de la mort terrible perpetuele”) become the rather differently weighted “And in þat land . . . suffer *hard* passioun and dede of þe Iewes for *vs synfull wormes*, to by and delyuer vs fra deed withouten end.” This rephrasing is doubtless aimed at preparing the audience for the later exhortation to love and serve the Lord and his land by laboring to win it back—a passage from which the Englisher omits the repeated praise of the land’s fruitfulness, getting straight to the point: “Þis es þe land þat es hight til vs in heritage.”²⁸

The changes in Velser’s Version go still further than these, since this German rendering typically glosses as well as translates. Despite their rhetorical flair and thematic appropriateness, the opening phrases, for example, were entirely overwritten:

Do ich von hayman uß für in dem mü̃t und in der sach das ich wö̃lt faren úber mer zû dem hailigen grab and zû dem gesegnotten ertterich, das man in lattin nempt Terra Promissionis. Und es haisset billich das gesegnot ertterich und das hailig land, wann es gesegnot und gehailiget ist mit dem kosperen und hailigen plû̃t unsers herren Jhesu Cristi.

Since I traveled from my homeland in the desire and the intention of traveling over the sea to the holy grave and to the blessed territory that in Latin is called *Terra Promissionis*. And it is commonly called the blessed territory and the holy land because it was blessed and hallowed by the precious and holy blood of our lord Jesus Christ.

Among other things, this opening foregrounds the sacred, naming the Holy Sepulcher first and repeating the words “holy” (“hailig”) and “blessed” (“gesegnot”) like an incantation. Physical geography, moreover, gets transmuted from space into movement, activating the “over” in overseas, while Salvation History is invoked through a language at once sacred, scientific, and universal in medieval eyes; rather than attempt a calque as in the English versions—“the lond of promysioun or of behest” (Cotton), “the lande of hetynge” (Defective), or “þe land of repromission” (Egerton)—Velser returns “terre de promission” to the Latin, giving his opening the weight of almost biblical authority.²⁹

The translator’s most significant change, though, is the introduction of the first-person singular pronoun. Whereas the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions all follow their Insular source in keeping Sir John out of the first part until the concluding prophecy, Velser overwrites his Continental

source by bringing the pronoun in five times: twice in the opening phrases, twice to remind the audience that “I have spoken about this matter above,” and once in the prophecy. Such repetition considerably alters the strategy whereby the exordium initially constitutes its audience, since it undoes the creation of a communal “we” that is prior to the guiding “I.” Even so, Velser’s Version still defines the audience as a religious community, and the text never fails to stress this, starting with the “I”’s opening journey to Christ’s grave.

In addition, the German text does not follow the Continental Version in recounting Jesus’s roles in the Holy Land chronologically; instead, it returns to those roles only after moving from his incarnation in “the *noble* virgin *Saint* Mary” (“von der *edeln* junckfrowen *Sant* Marien”) to the Passion, asserting what the other versions only imply: “and [he] would also in the same land offer his holy body on the gallows of the holy cross for us poor sinners” (“und [er] wolt ouch in dem selben land sinen hailigen lyb opfferen an dem galgen des hailigen krútz fúr uns armen súnder”).³⁰ Velser’s Version thus begins at the highest pitch of emotion, rather than building up to it. In fact, it omits altogether the climactic exclamation (“Ha, dieu! quel amour. . .”), rephrasing it as an impassioned explanation to say why “we” (rather than “one”) should honor such a lord; as before, the passage draws attention to the sacred, while stressing in its own way the exordium’s view of sacrifice as exchange and being more forthright about the violence needed to reclaim the land overseas. Jesus died in Jerusalem, the text says, so that “everyone” (“yederman”) would know of his love for “us poor sinners” (“uns armen súnder”), who are undeserving:

Wann wir múgent wol sehen und wissen daz er uns nit mit gelt, mit búrgen, mit steten, noch mit landen erlößet hatt, besunder . . . mit sinem hailigen fronlichnam und mit sinem hailigen rosenfarwen plút. . . . Dar umb sôllen wir billich dem herren und das land da er gewunet hatt, eren und wirdigen. . . . Dar umb ain yeglicher cristen der es vermôchte solte gern und mit grossem andacht súchen das land das uns got mit sinem hailigen plút gehailiget hatt und uns das verhaissen hat in unser erb. Da von wir cristen nach Cristo sigent genant . . . dar umb sôltend wir billichen kriegien und fechten umb unser land und unser erbe das uns unser vatter gelaßen hatt.³¹

Because we are capable of seeing well and knowing that he saved us not with money, with towns, with cities, nor even with lands, but rather . . . with his holy body and with his holy rose-colored blood. . . . Therefore we all ought to honor and worship the lord and the land he won. . . . Therefore every Christian who can do it ought eagerly and with great devotion to seek the land that God hallowed for us with his holy blood and promised us as our inheritance. For we are called Christians after Christ . . . wherefore we all ought also to make war and fight for our land and our inheritance which our father left us.

Velser's reworking does not stop here either. The transformed exhortation leads into an even more transformed critique, in which *all* Christians are reproached for the state of Christendom. Only then does the text blame the ruling estate, and it displaces to the exordium's second part the claim that the commons are ready to sacrifice their bodies and goods for the Holy Land, there attributing such readiness to "many people" ("vil folck"). The concern with right rule remains, then, but not the momentary idealization of the ruled. Moreover, Velser adds the emperor to the pope and God as those who would be pleased by the Holy Land's recapture, and concludes with a more emphatic prophecy: "It appears certain to me that not a long time will pass, and we shall win the holy land, and it will come again into the hand of the right heirs" ("Sicher mich duncket das nit lang zitt für gang, wir gewynnend das hailig land, und kome wyder in der rechten erben hand").³²

More radical still than Velser's reworking is that of the Vulgate Latin Version, which entirely paraphrases the exordium's first part, keeping both the piety and the propaganda, but placing its own more orthodox stamp on them. It begins with a single long sentence setting the Holy Land under the sign of Christian History while assigning roles to nearly everybody in an imagined crusade, and this sentence is followed by a brief but searching critique of "our times" rather than the ruling estate. The point of the opening sentence, which turns the tricolon crescendo into a more theologically precise definition of the land overseas, is simple: "Since the land of Jerusalem, the promised land of the sons of God, is for many reasons worthier to be possessed than all the lands of the world together . . . it is certain that it ought to be loved by all who are called Christian after Christ as his own heirs and honoured for its every power and measure" ("Cum terra Hierosolimitana, terra promissionis filiorum Dei, dignior cunctis mundi terris sit habenda multis ex causis . . . certum est, quod ab omnibus qui Christiano nomine a Christo dicuntur, sit tanquam a suis propriis haeredibus diligenda, & pro cuiusque potestate ac modulo honoranda").³³

The many reasons are not given, though; only one is, and it fills the large ellipsis in the quoted sentence: "especially because God the maker of heaven and earth deigned to value it so much that there he revealed his own son, Christ the savior of the world, to humankind through [His] incarnation from the chaste virgin . . ." ("& praecipue illa, quod Deus conditor coeli & mundi, ipsam tanti dignatus fuit aestimare, ut in eo [sic] proprium filium salvatorem mundi Christum exhibuerit generi humano per incarnationem ex intemerata Virgine . . ."). In its entirety this reason is an orthodox summary of the events from the Incarnation to the Last Judgment, all of them linked by their occur-

rence in the same place. Thus whereas the Continental exordium offers a repetitive, emotive meditation on Jesus's life in the Holy Land, the Latin text offers a crisp, orderly narrative that doubles as a statement of belief, leaving the audience to respond as it will.

No less orderly is the subsequent account of those who ought to love the Jerusalem territory, although here hierarchy replaces chronology as the principle of order and the text allows itself a moment of emotion. The land is to be loved by princes and rulers ("A principibus quidem, & potentibus"), who are to recover it from the infidel—long alas! its possessors ("per annos heu plurimos possederunt"); by ordinary people and the strong, who are to be devout pilgrims seeking remission of their trespasses; and even by the weak and the burdened, who are to encourage and help these other travelers, at least pouring out faithful prayers. Rounding out this tidy picture is an announcement that "our times" are bad—"Virtue is gone, the Church trod under, the Clergy in error, the devil reigns, and simony holds sway" ("Virtus, Ecclesia, Clerus, daemon, symonia, / Cessat, calcatur, errat, regnat, dominatur")—and that the impious "Saracens" thus hold the land through God's just judgment, a thought painful to pious minds.³⁴ Clearly, the overwritten Latin exordium works on the principle that if the prose can supply the reminder, the audience will provide the emotion. Cautious rhetorically, the text is cautious theologically as well, concluding with pious minds and painful thoughts rather than a hopeful prophecy.

Beyond the Holy Land

Having passed from praise of the Holy Land to a prophecy of the land's "restoration" to its "rightful heirs," the Continental and Insular exordium (to which my reading now returns) reaches its second major part, whereupon the text offers a more banal but also a more useful prediction: an announcement by the emergent "I John Mandeville" of *The Book's* subject matter and aims. The concerns of the authorial exordium's first part have not disappeared, of course, and the text draws attention to its thematic and ideological continuity by resuming the interrupted syntax of its opening movement while shifting the emphasis slightly away from the land in relation to God and more toward the land in relation to His children: "And since there has long been no general passage overseas and many people enjoy hearing the said holy land spoken about and take pleasure in this . . ." ("Et purceo qil y ad long temps qil neust passage general outre meer et plusours gentz se delitent en oyer parler de la dite seint terre et en ount solaz . . .").

Given the prior tenor of the exordium, and given that the text here again reminds the audience of what they already know—that there has long been no “general passage overseas”—one might have expected a proposal for a new crusade. That certainly is what the phrase “general passage” would suggest, since it alludes to a distinction formulated by propagandists after the fall of Acre in 1291. In their view, crusading could take two forms: the *passagium generale*, a large international expedition to defend and recover the Holy Land, a “passage” often dreamt of but never attempted in the fourteenth century; or the *passagium particulare*, a smaller expedition to achieve some tactical aim in pursuit of the larger goal, the best that Latin Christians could manage after Acre.³⁵

Yet having implicitly invoked this distinction, the text ignores it, and quickly moves from future gains through past losses to present pleasures, both spiritual and temporal, offering its Christian audience not the challenge of a new crusade, but the consolation of talk about the Holy Land: nostalgia and entertainment, rather than exhortation and strategy. The suddenness of this shift is easy to miss, since it is immediately followed by the introduction of an “I” whose own particular “passages” overseas are even more extraordinary than those of Polo or anyone who ever made a “general passage”:

ieo Johan Maundeuille, chiualer, ia soit ceo qe ieo ne soie dignes, neez et norriz Dengleterre de la ville Seint Alban, qi y passay la meer lan millesme ccc^{me} vintisme et secund, le iour de Seint Michel, et qi depuis ay estee vltre meer par long temps, et ay veu et enuiron meint pays et meintez diuerses prouinces et meintz diuerses regions et diuersez isles, et ay passe par Turkye, par Armenye la petite et la grande, par Tartarie, par Persye, par Sirie, par Arabe, par Egipte la haute et la basse, par Libie, par Caldee, par grant partie de Ethiopie, par Amazonie, par Ynde la meinour et la moiene et de la maiour vn partie, et par mout des diuerses isles qi sunt enuiron Ynde, ou y demorerent multz des diuerses gentz de diuerses leyes et de diuerses faceons—des quelles terres et isles ieo parleray pluis pleignerement et deuiseray ascune partie de choses qi y sont, quant y serra lieu demparler, solonc ceo qil me puet souenir, especialment pur cieux qi voluntee et entente ont de uisiter la noble [seinte] cite de Ierusalem et lez seintz lieux qi la entour sunt, et lour deuiseray [vne partie des chosez et] quele chemyn ils purroient tenir, qar ieo en ay par meint passez et chiuachez ouesqe bone compaignie, Dieu graciez.³⁶

I John Mandeville, knight, though I be unworthy, born and raised in England in the town of St. Albans, who passed the sea in the year 1322, on Michaelmas day, and who since have been beyond the sea for a long time, and have seen and traversed many countries and many diverse provinces and many diverse regions and diverse isles, and have passed through Turkey, through lesser and greater Armenia, through Tartary, through Persia, through Syria, through Arabia, through high and low Egypt, through Libya, through Chaldea, through a large part of Ethiopia, through Amazonia, through some

of lesser, middle, and greater India, and through many of the diverse isles around India, where dwell many diverse people of diverse laws and diverse customs—of which lands and isles I shall speak more fully and describe some of things that are there, when it is the place to speak about them, according as I can remember them, especially for those who have the will and desire to visit the noble [holy] city of Jerusalem and the holy places round about, and I shall describe for them [part of the things (there) and] what route they can take, for I have many times passed and ridden it with good company, God be thanked.

This is a remarkable passage—in both senses—and not quite what the text so far has led one to expect. As the exordium is offering the sort of data found in academic prologues (the author's name, life, intention, the text's subject matter, order, and utility),³⁷ the promised account of the Holy Land suddenly metamorphoses into a larger account of the diverse lands, peoples, laws, and customs overseas.

Recent readers have often commented on the text's eventual move from the Holy Land to parts farther east, and some have suggested that this extension marks a break with the Christian pilgrim's view of the world elaborated in roughly the first half of the text. Greenblatt, for instance, claims that the move implies "an abandonment of the dream of a sacred center upon which all routes converge and a turning instead toward diversity, difference, the bewildering variety of 'marvellous things'"; and a similar view was earlier offered by Zacher, who claims that the "book effectively subordinates pilgrimage to a form of travel motivated by love for this world" and "decentralizes Jerusalem."³⁸ There is something to be said for these views, but they are to my mind a little too neat, since they assume that the fusion of pilgrimage writing with other kinds of writing about the world affects the meaning and value of the former only. In addition (as I suggest in subsequent chapters), both readings overlook much contradictory evidence, starting here in the authorial exordium, which clearly frames its brief catalogue of the world's far-eastern diversity between references to the Holy Land and Jerusalem.

Likewise too neat is Greenblatt's claim that *The Book's* move beyond the Holy Land, "at almost the exact mid-point in [the] text," is "decisive, peculiar, and unexplained." For one thing, the move does not occur at the mid-point, at least not for the first time, and so it comes as no surprise; rather, it first occurs in the exordium, proleptically, and is later repeated several times in the text's account of the Near East; as I show in the next chapter, Jerusalem and Paradise both appear in the opening visit to Constantinople, where they establish the historical geography underlying *The Book's* world.³⁹ Furthermore, the extension is not quite as peculiar and unexplained as Greenblatt suggests (though

it is brilliant), since it exploits something already found in many texts after the early thirteenth century, when the Mongols had appeared on the scene and had come to be regarded not only as a threat to Christendom but also as potential converts and allies against Islam.

Apart from moments in individual works such as Fulcher of Chartres's history of the First Crusade or Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*, the most striking conjunction of the biblical with the marvelous East prior to *The Book*'s occurs not in any single text, but in miscellanies within which *The Book* itself would soon find a place. A thirteenth- and fourteenth-century codex put together at Bury St. Edmunds, for instance, contains these mainly Latin texts, among others: part of the *Historia Orientalis*, William of Rubruck's itinerary, Macarius's journey to the Earthly Paradise, Honorius's *Imago mundi*, the *Letter of Prester John*, Johannes de Sacrobosco's *De sphaera*, some small tracts on the Holy Land, and the accounts of Ireland and Wales by Gerald of Wales. Such collections were not composed of only Latin texts either. A mid-fourteenth-century French codex, for example, contains two Alexander romances, a version of Vincent of Beauvais' abridgement of John of Plano Carpini's *Ystoria Mongalorum*, Jean de Vignay's translations of Odoric, the *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* (the pro-crusading tract addressed to Philip VI of France), as well as extracts from the *Bible Historiale*. And similar vernacular collections were built around the translations produced by Hakluyt's and Ramusio's medieval precursor, Jean le Long of Ypres.⁴⁰

Like the enlarged conception of the world embodied in such collections, then, the expanded East resulting from *The Book*'s move beyond the Holy Land is anything but a turning away from Jerusalem, whose centrality is strongly emphasized not only in the exordium and the account of the city itself, but in the Far East as well; rather, the move represents the *Mandeville*-author's at once bold and conservative attempt to fashion a single, more or less coherent textual and geographical world out of the diverse works collected in the miscellanies, and to do so by setting that world firmly between the two privileged sites of Christian History: Jerusalem and the Earthly Paradise.

I John Mandeville, Knight

Apart from linking the biblical and the marvelous East within a single book, the passage quoted above is obviously an attempt to establish the text's authority on the basis of Sir John's experience and to set him up as the successor of Marco Polo, doing for the latter's book what Milton would do for the classical epic: paying it a kind of corrective homage by bringing its material under

the aegis of Christian History. Indeed, it is hard not to read the authorial exordium's second part as a dialogic response to the *Divisament's* prologue, which presents Polo's book as an eyewitness account of eastern wonders by the world's greatest traveler "since our Lord God with His own hands shaped Adam our first father until this moment" (c. 1298). But *The Book's* presentation of Sir John is not only a thematic response to the *Divisament's* prologue; it is also a formal one. Polo's claim occurs in the third person, mediated and in effect "witnessed" by his ghostwriter Rustichello, who insists on the veracity of their joint account: "our book [notre livre] will recount [these wonders] to you in due order, just as Messer Marco Polo, wise and noble citizen of Venice, recounted what he has seen with his own eyes. . . . And everyone who reads or hears this book ought to believe it, because all are true things."⁴¹

In contrast, Sir John's claim occurs in the first person and seeks to assure its audience not by assertion, but by echoing the "quasi-juridical" formula of fourteenth-century French chroniclers and historians, as in the prologue to Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis* (1309): "In the name of God Almighty, I, Jean lord of Joinville, seneschal of Champagne, had the life of our saint (king) Louis written down, what I saw and heard in the space of six years that I was in his company on pilgrimage overseas, and since we returned." Adapted from the standard opening of vernacular wills, and thus borrowing their claim to veracity before God and the law, the formula identifies the "I" first by a proper name and then by a title and function that situate the person within the social order.⁴²

In *The Book*, the absent author presents himself as an English Knight born and raised in a town famous for its monastery and chroniclers and located one day's journey north of London. It may be that this limited part of the initial self-presentation is genuine, and many readers, both medieval and modern, have accepted it as such, whether or not they accept the rest of what the text recounts. Similar figures—fourteenth-century nobles who composed a single vernacular book—certainly existed on both sides of the Channel: Henry of Lancaster, for example, who in 1354 wrote his book of holy healing (*Le livre de seyntz medicines*), or Ogier VIII, Seigneur of Anglure, who in about 1396 recorded his Jerusalem pilgrimage. Yet even if *The Book* was composed by a John Mandeville, knight, most of what the text tells us about him is false. The "I" that emerges in the exordium's second part (the "Sir John" of my reading) is clearly a textual fiction, based in part on experiences borrowed from others' texts or invented in response to them—a common enough medieval practice—and is thus to be distinguished from the *Mandeville*-author, and perhaps even from much of the text, which has its own impersonal "voice."⁴³

Recognizing that "I John Mandeville" is a discursive fiction created by the text, we can return to the "quasi-juridical" formula in which the "author"

first appears and ask several questions: why is John Mandeville a knight (and not, say, a cleric)? why English? why from St. Alban's? why 1322 as a date of departure? As always, it is possible to answer these questions by looking for sources, and this is what some have done, viewing identification as explanation.⁴⁴ Yet each piece of "borrowed" information is now in a new context, and takes whatever meaning it can be given from the reader's encounter with it there. Indeed, even before they mean anything else—and this is surely their most important function—the details convey a rhetorical meaning through their form and specificity: they are authenticating, testamentary.

Beyond this, their meaning is a matter of conjecture, but one can speculate on what medieval audiences might perhaps have assumed upon encountering the authorial exordium. The departure date of 1322 (or 1332, as in some manuscripts) coincides with no obviously relevant historical events, but it might have implied to *The Book's* first readers that Sir John, in being outside Christendom since then, was not implicated in its many conflicts, leaving him free to criticize his society as he does in the exordium's first part and will do again throughout the text. His upbringing in St. Albans likewise has no directly obvious significance, but it does associate him with an important monastery town where he could have got the education that allows him to quote Latin Scripture at will.

In contrast, Sir John's nationality and status might have had some significance for his earliest audiences. Not only were the English thought to have a propensity for foreign travel, a belief to which *The Book* alludes in Ynde, they were also known for their "geographical culture" linking abbey, university, and court, and *The Book* presents itself as a layman's contribution to geographical knowledge. By making the layman a knight, moreover—an historical person as well as the stock figure exploited by Chaucer and later adapted by European explorers for their own writings—the text sets itself up as worldly, as the product of an active rather than a contemplative life, and thus as part of a tradition of French texts about the East produced not by clerics relying on second-hand information, but by devout knights who had themselves been overseas.⁴⁵

Language, Memory, and Authority

One important consequence of making *The Book* ostensibly the work of a devout knight is that Sir John can appeal for authentication and authority to a narrower constituency within the general Latin Christian audience: the nobility, a social group whose interest in crusading and the East remained

strong throughout the fourteenth century. And this is exactly what the authorial exordium does in its closing apology:

Et sachez qe ieusse cest escript [liuerette/liure] mis en latyn pur pluis briefment deuier; mes, pur ceo qe plusours entendent mieltz romantz qe latin, ieo lay mys en romance, pur ceo qe chescun lentende et luy chualers et les seignurs et lez autres nobles homes qi ne sciuent point de latin ou poy, et quount estee outre meer, sachent et entendent, si ieo dye voir ou noun, et si ieo erre en deuisant par noun souenance ou autrement, qils le puissent adresser et amender, qar choses de long temps passez par la veue torrent en obly, et memorie de homme ne puet mye tot retenir ne comprendre.⁴⁶

And know that I should have set this writing [booklet/book] down in Latin in order to describe more briefly; but because more people understand Romance [French] better than Latin, I have set it down in Romance, so that everyone will understand it and the knights and lords and other noble men who know little or no Latin, and who have been overseas, will know and understand whether I speak the truth or not, and whether I err in describing by not remembering or otherwise, that they can address this and correct it, for things long since passed out of view get forgotten, and human memory cannot retain or comprehend everything.

With these words we can see even more clearly what the phrase “I John Mandeville, knight,” implies: *The Book* is the work of someone whose authority comes not simply from his own experiences, but also from his membership in a privileged stratum of the larger Christian community, whose task it was to rule and defend that community. By describing what he remembers about the East, then, and by doing so for the benefit of the whole community, Sir John sets himself up as keeper of part of the social or communal memory.⁴⁷ Hence the insistence on the utility of his recollections and on the (noble) audience’s right to correct them; hence too the insistence on their vernacular transmission.

Like the traditional storyteller, Sir John attempts to assure his success first by creating a sense of community between himself and those to and for whom he speaks (“everyone” and the nobility) and then by stimulating a desire for the information that he has to offer: material at once useful and pleasing because it is to be circulated among those who share the transcendent values articulated in the exordium. Unable to defend his Lord’s legacy, the English Knight will at least defend His memory, addressing his audience through what unites, not what divides them: faith, pleasure in information about the distant diversities, and a desire to see the Holy Land.

This concluding emphasis on memory, both individual and social, is especially noteworthy, since it is a sign of *The Book*’s medievalness and distinguishes it from later geographical and travel writings. As Mary Carruthers

has argued, medieval culture was profoundly memorial, and its conception of memory was fundamentally ethical. It is thus significant that *The Book* presents itself as an act of individual memory open to general correction, since in the medieval context this gesture would have given the text a moral virtue as well as a social function, making it communal rather than private property, and therefore requiring circulation, use, and even emendation to acquire its authority.⁴⁸

It is also significant that Sir John claims that his matter should have been set down in Latin, but has been written in “Romance” instead. One nineteenth-century scholar saw in this claim a sign that the *Mandeville*-author originally wavered in his choice of language, while another scholar, practicing a hermeneutics of suspicion, saw him deliberately going against the accepted medieval practice of using Latin for learned writing in order to conceal his activities as a plagiarist.⁴⁹ In context, however, the concluding claim is less a sign of love or duplicity than it is an authorizing gesture, suggesting that *The Book*’s matter is important and true enough to be set down in Latin (and some readers felt that way, since *The Book* was translated into Latin five times). It is also a further attempt to secure the audience’s goodwill, telling them that such matter will not be circulated among the clergy alone, but shared in a language uniting courts and “common” readers everywhere from England to Italy and more and more often taking on “clerical” as well as “courtly” functions (as in the Florentine Brunetto Latini’s *Tresor* [c. 1266]).⁵⁰

There is likewise something positive in the seemingly negative remark that a Latin account would have been more concise, since it implies that the “Romance” account will be copious, and copiousness is, as Carruthers suggests, what gives medieval texts their ethical force: “Instead of talking about ethical rules in medieval culture, it would be truer to speak of ethical memories, ‘contained’ in texts, ‘dicta et facta memorabilia’; they are not ethical algorithms or universal definitions, but are ‘copious’, like literature. And they require not to be applied (like a theorem) but to be ‘read’, interpreted.” This, certainly, is how *The Book* comes at the specific ethical questions with which it is most concerned (those of Christian political and religious reform): it returns to them again and again through the recounting of memorable words and deeds, presumably expecting readers to make these their own. No medieval book, after all, was considered to have been truly read until its readers made it a part of themselves, even to the point of intervening in the text wherever they saw fit, and readers were particularly apt to do this with vernacular writings like *The Book*, “respecting the *res* but not necessarily the *verba*.”⁵¹

“Authorized” Versions

Verbal changes, as we have already seen, are a fascinating index of *The Book*’s ability to engage its intermediaries over the meaning and emphases given to the “res,” or subject matter. In the exordium’s latter part, the material is presented so as to authenticate Sir John’s subsequent account, and many of the translators found their own ways to do this. The Vulgate Latin Version, for example, develops the Knight as an almost psychological figure, making him an exemplary pilgrim as if to compensate for his errancy in the non-Christian world: “I John Mandeuill of the military order. . . was in my youth led by such a desire that although I could not regain the above-named land for its heirs, either by force or by my own men, I would still go there for a certain time as a pilgrim and would pay somewhat my respect from nearby” (“Ego Ioannes Mandeuill militaris ordinis . . . ducebar in Adolescentia mea tali inspiratione, ut quamvis non per potentiam, nec per vires proprias possem praefatam terram suis haeredibus recuperare, irem tamen per aliquod temporis spacium peregrinari ibidem, & salutarem aliquantulum de propinquo”).⁵²

By the same token, this rendering has Sir John offer his “opus” to audiences not for pleasure and utility, but for the latter alone:

per 33. annos in transmarinis partibus mansi, peregrinatus sum, ambulavi, & circuivi multas, ac diversas patrias. . . . Attamen quia summo desiderio in terra promissionis eram, ipsam diligentius per loca vestigiorum filii Dei perlustrare curavi, & diutius in illa steti. Quapropter & in hac prima parte huius operis iter tam peregrinandi, quam navigandi, a partibus Angliae ad ipsam describo, & loca notabiliter sancta, quae intra eandem sunt breviter commemoro & diligenter, quatenus peregrinis tam in itinere quam in proventionem valeat haec descriptio in aliquo deservire.⁵³

for 33 years I remained overseas; I went as a pilgrim, traveled, and went around many and diverse countries. . . . Nevertheless because I was by the highest desire in the land of promise, I took pains to survey carefully the places connected with the son of God, and remained longer in that land. Wherefore in the first part of this work I both describe the way by land and sea from England to that land, and briefly and carefully recall especially the holy places that are there so that this description may be effective in serving pilgrims in some way, both en route and upon arrival.

In contrast to the authorial exordium, the Vulgate Latin stops here, thus emphasizing its portrait of Sir John and the devotional value of *The Book*. It asks for no correction, and says nothing about its genesis (though the *incipits* usually present it as a translation) or about its nature as a periphrastic abridgement (a response perhaps to the original claim that a Latin account would

have been more concise). No one, it seems, not the author nor his intermediaries, was above the sleight of hand necessary to advance their work.

The exordium's second part in Velser's Version differs considerably from the Latin, not least because it stresses the marvelous, translating the repeated French "diverse" as "wunderlich." Unlike his Latin counterpart, Velser sees no contradiction between the sacred and the marvelous, recognizing that both will win over an audience. No less effective is his having Sir John address the audience as "you," whose receptiveness the translator attempts to enhance further by having the Knight explicitly claim that this is an eyewitness account: "And I shall tell *you* about (these) lands and isles, as accurately as I can, what they look like, and *as I have seen everything myself, so you will afterward hear*" ("Und von landen und ynselen wil ich *úch* sagen, so ich úmer ebnost kan, wie sie gestalt sind, und *als ich das alles selb gesehen hon, als ir das hernach hórent*").⁵⁴

Similarly, Velser rewrites the closing apology so as to heighten both its emphasis on communal, correctable memory and the directness of its address to the audience, which is now expanded to include women ("any lord, knight, and lady"; "ain jeglich herre, ritter und frowe")—who were in fact readers of *The Book*, Christine de Pizan and Valentina Visconti among them. Most notably, Velser renders Sir John's comment about writing in Romance without drawing even the slightest attention to the fact that the words now appear in German translation, perhaps to suggest that his readers are getting the original otherwise unchanged: "And know that I made this book in the French language . . ." ("Und wissend daz ich diß bûch in frantzoser sprach machet . . .").⁵⁵

In contrast to the Vulgate Latin and Velser Versions, the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton texts make no notable changes to the account of *The Book's* author and subject matter, although all three insist on Sir John's noble status by raising his traveling companions from a "bone compaignie" to a "gude company of [many] lordes."⁵⁶ Having rendered this part of the exordium largely unchanged, however, the versions go their own ways in the closing apology. Like the Latin, the Defective and Egerton Versions omit it outright: the ultimate authorizing gesture—since it makes each seem to be the author's own text—and a consequential one in the case of the Defective Version, which survives in some thirty-eight manuscripts, and so was effectively the Middle English *Mandeville*.

The Cotton Version also obscures its origins and presents itself as the author's text, but does so in the most radical way, uniquely overwriting *The Book's* account of its genesis (only the Irish Version mentioned in the next section approaches its daring): "And zee schull vndirstonde þat I haue put this boke out of latyn in to frensch & translated it azen out of frensch in to

Englyssch þat euery man of my nacioun may vnderstonde it.”⁵⁷ Probably because the very close (omitted here) of this concluding passage is nonsense, mistaking entirely the drift of its Insular source, *The Book*’s modern readers have missed the significance of the quoted description of Sir John’s compositional practice, and recent editors have even dismissed it as simply another error by the “slavish” translator.⁵⁸ Yet if the sentence is a misrendering, and it clearly is, it is just as clearly deliberate. Inspired no doubt by the implications of the French wording as well as a desire to secure the widest possible audience for his and the *Mandeville*-author’s work, the translator has “improved” his source by giving his own rendering the recognized authority of Latin and French and has in addition done his best for Sir John by making him not only a great world traveler like Polo, but also a literate polyglot like John Gower.

Radical Redactions

Striking as the Cotton Version’s “improvement” is, however, and consequential as it proved to be after the version effectively became *The Book* in the nineteenth century, it has to be seen as a change made within the framework of the authorial exordium. The Cotton translation thus resembles the Defective, Egerton, Velser and even Vulgate Latin Versions more than it differs from them. In contrast, several other renderings—the Bodley, Metrical, and Irish Versions, all of which survive in only one or two copies, and the widely circulated von Diemeringen Version—do not make their changes within the authorial form; rather, they alter the form itself, calling text, audience, and author into being in different ways and creating quite different attitudes toward both text and author.

The briefest of the radically overwritten exordiums occurs in the Bodley Version, which achieves its brevity by beginning with the second part. It thus omits the elaborate orchestration of piety and propaganda, as if such an opening were irrelevant to its storybook redaction of the whole, taking for granted an audience interested in both the Holy Land and eastern marvels, while preserving the claim that *The Book* was made especially for intending Jerusalem pilgrims—encouraging even the poorest among them by having Sir John note that he walked as well as rode on his travels. Like the Defective, Egerton, Velser, and Vulgate Latin Versions (as well as the four Insular Latin renderings), this version effectively passes itself off as the original by omitting *The Book*’s account of its genesis, although the Rawlinson copy does draw attention to the author’s choice of medium in its own sort of authorizing gesture: “And thus *in proce* [prose] I shal bigynne this werke, *because that often in ro-*

maunce and ryme is defawt, and nouzt accordement founden to the matir, but be bestyghes [by-ways] sekande."⁵⁹

Conversely, the Irish Version revises the exordium by omitting its second part and keeping the initial emphasis on the Holy Land. In fact, its opening is the only one of the radical redactions to preserve the reference to Jerusalem's geographical centrality. Preceding this focus on the "universal," though, is a reminder of the local: an announcement naming both "the place of book" (Ross Broin, where the Irish translation was made) and Sir John, now "a knight of the king of England's household." In addition, the opening presentation neglects the movement from piety to crusading propaganda, paraphrasing its source (the Defective Version) so as to insist on the expansion of Christianity "eastwards and westwards, southwards and northwards" from Jerusalem, while Sir John fails to make his usual first-person appearance, finding himself sharing centerstage with the translator, Fingin O'Mahoney:

... and whosoever would fain know the best way to wend from every country to Jerusalem . . . Fingin, son of Diarmait Mór Húa Mathgamna, will tell it. For 'tis he that put this book out of English and Latin and Greek and Hebrew into Gaelic to shew the ways . . . to Jerusalem unto everyone who may desire to go in pilgrimage thither . . . and every way that John took thenceforward, and to relate every marvel that John saw among the men and the countries of the world in general. And in the age of the Lord, when John set out on his journey was a thousand and three hundred and thirty-two years. When Fingin at last put it into Gaelic the Lord's age was 1475 years. And John was thirty-four years making a visitation of the world, and on his return to Rome the Pope confirmed his book.⁶⁰

This striking passage outdoes even the Cotton exordium, since it transforms Sir John—like Fingin—into a scholar of the highest order and gives *their* book the unimpeachable authority of ancient, original, and sacred languages, joining the linguistic center with its vernacular margins, and perhaps suggesting that *The Book* was available to Greek Christians and Jews. The translator also draws attention to the fidelity and fullness of his rendering, assuring his audience that they are getting the author's own copious text—and the whole truth, as even the pope testified. Though it fits with Fingin's inventive account of *The Book's* linguistic pedigree, this bold invocation of the highest earthly authority was not his doing; it is, as we shall see, a gesture found at the *close* of the Defective Version and borrowed here by a translator who saw the value of making it at the outset.

The opening of von Diemeringen's Version is less grandiose than that of the Irish text, but of all the versions known to me, none has such an elaborate opening frame: we know exactly what we are in for when we reach the end of the exordium. But perhaps one should not call it an exordium, since

the bulk of it is taken up with such a lengthy description of contents that it overwhelms everything else; it recounts not only the text's main divisions and plan, but the matter of the whole, first "book" by "book," and then chapter by chapter (five books and a variable number of chapters, depending on the manuscript). Framing this description (before and after) is a brief statement from the translator justifying his labors; it is not until the end of this elaborate apparatus that "I John Mandeville" makes his appearance—and then as a world traveler, not a pilgrim.

Von Diemeringen's Version opens with the translator's echo of Sir John's "quasi-juridical" testimony, presenting itself in a fashion recalling both the Cotton Version's assertion that its readers need an English text and Velser's emphasis on the marvelous: "Since I have all the time been inclined to look at and hear about foreign lands and marvels . . . I Otto von Diemeringen Canon of Metz have turned this book from Latin and French into German to the delight of Germans who especially want to read about foreign things" ("Wande mir alle zit zû sinne ist gewesen frömede lande und wûnder zû scho-wende und zû hörende. . . So han ich Otte von Diemeringen Dûmherre zû Metze daz selbe bûch von latine und von weltsche zû tûtsche gezogen zû einer ergötzung aller tûtschen die gerne frömede sachen lesen wellent").⁶¹ Like O'Mahony, the translator saw himself performing a service as valuable as Sir John's, and took credit for it, as did both the Danish translator, the cleric Peder Hare (or Haræ), and the Czech, Vavřinec of Březov, "servant of the most illustrious prince and lord, Vaclav, Roman and Czech king," and author of a Czech world chronicle and a Latin Hussite chronicle—an international group that reveals *The Book's* popularity with clerics, courtiers, and intellectuals alike.⁶²

Even more interesting than von Diemeringen's opening declaration, though, is his concluding statement before he turns the text over to "I John Mandeville"; for, like the Vulgate Latin's reworking of Sir John's initial self-presentation, it tells us about *The Book's* multifaceted international reputation c. 1400. Whereas the Latin text assumes (and attempts to create) an audience interested in devotional travel, the German rendering assumes one interested in both curious travel and famous travelers, outdoing even Rustichello's claims for Polo. Closing with a gesture found in no other rendering, von Diemeringen presents his translation as homage to the Knight and his book, while celebrating travel and travelers in all their variety. Thus, after noting how travel expands one's knowledge and surveying the various motives for travel (chivalry, piety, business, wonder-seeing, and love),⁶³ the text turns to Sir John:

und under allen den die ye lande durch varen hant so lyset man lützel von keyme der von froimden landen also vil gesehen habe als ein ritter der dis bûch zû latine und zû weltsche geschriben hat von vil landen und wand mich duncket daz es niht unnützlich [sy, iß nach syme dode zeü tzeügende und zeu offenbarende wante iß] zû Paris zû brucke in Engelland und anderswo von [manichen] erbern [konigen fursten graven herren] rittern und knechten und [gewanderten] koufluden vür war gehalten ist und gen Brucke von xviii kungrichen kouflute [mancherley lude] koment und yglicher dis bûch gerne horte so han ich es von latine und von weltsche zû tûtsche gezogen [durch ere des me genanten ritters] der dis bûch nach sime tode zû einem ewigen selgerete gemachet hat.⁶⁴

and among all those who have traveled through those countries, one reads little by anyone who has seen as much of foreign lands as a knight who wrote this book in Latin and French about many lands. And so it seems to me not unuseful [to testify and publish it after his death, since it is] regarded as true at Paris, at Bruges, in England, and elsewhere by [many] noble [kings, princes, counts, lords,] knights and squires and [traveled] merchants. And merchants [many people] from twenty-eight kingdoms come to Bruges and each gladly hears this book. Thus I have taken it from Latin and French into German [in praise of the well-known knight,] who made the book for his eternal good fame after his death.

This emphasis on Sir John's fame also manifests itself in the most curious form of homage paid to the Knight's book: its transformation into verse. More than any other redaction, the Metrical Version ignores the two-part authorial exordium, preferring to create text, author, and audience in an entirely new way: it imagines an audience something like von Diemeringen's and presents itself as a book of marvels. Thus after a conventional praise of the Trinity, the text begins like any popular romance—"Nowe lordis and ladies leve and dere, / Yif ye wolle of wondris here. . . ."—after which Sir John emerges in the third person as a stock character: "a fers man," "a man of noble fame," and "a worþi sowdioure," who traveled in order to see "the wondres of þis worlde" and, unlike the knights errant usually celebrated in such pedestrian verse, wrote all that he saw and heard "in a boke."⁶⁵

Having turned Sir John into an old-style hero, the Metrical Version goes on, uniquely, to acknowledge that it is an edited selection: "But in þat boke is moche thinge / That nedeth naught in þis talkinge. / . . . And þerefor this litille tretis / Out of that boke drawe it ys, / That of alle merueilis tellys / That he sawe and some þinge elles." The "something else" proves to be quite something indeed. Hardly has "this little treatise" sent Sir John off "atte Dover" than it takes its lords and ladies to Rome, "chief of alle cristiane / And also hede of holi church, / . . . *Roma capud mundi tenet imperium mundi*." By the

time the nameless narrator announces that “here of Rome I make an eende,” the audience has received some four hundred lines of historical and topographical material adapted from the twelfth-century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*.⁶⁶

This displacement of Jerusalem—and Constantinople, *The Book*’s first stop—by Rome, and of prose by verse, represents the most radical overwriting of the exordium, and with it I too “make an eende” of my topological reading of the opening frame. Two renderings (the Vulgate Latin’s and von Diemeringen’s) deserve a fuller reading, but it should be clear how free even the most faithful translation can be—as free as the *Mandeville*-author was with his sources—and how much evidence *The Book*’s isotopes contain of its early reception. Apart from the liberty with which the author’s intermediaries reworked the text in *his* name, what is most notable about the versions is the sheer extent of their variance. Several redactors had no qualms about dispensing with the author’s highly wrought and rhetorically calculated opening, whether they reduced it to a bald statement of intent or replaced it with another way into the text. It is likely no accident that these are the renderings which emphasize *The Book*’s marvels more than its piety and propaganda. Yet even the one redaction that stresses the latter two elements overwrites the authorial text and presents Sir John as a model pious traveler. For the most part, as chapters 3 to 8 reveal, each isotope offers a tour of the East consistent with its reshaped opening—which is to say that later parts of the multi-text sometimes vary among themselves as much as does the exordium.

“Choses Estranges” in Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean

ONCE *THE BOOK*'S FORMAL EXORDIUM HAS called the work, Sir John, and the imagined Christian and noble audience into being, the text in the Continental and Insular Versions lingers no longer on further preliminaries than it takes to invoke God's name—“Or orrez en nom de Dieu le glorieus” (“Now hear in the name of God the glorious”)¹—and gets down to the business of writing East: that is, to fulfilling Sir John's two promises about *The Book*'s principal aims, subjects, and genres. According to the first and vaguer promise, the Knight will speak in due course about some of the diverse lands overseas and describe part of what exists there, while according to the second promise, he will describe the way to the Holy Land especially for those wanting to travel there.

By the *Mandeville*-author's own inaugural definition, then, *The Book* is projected as a description of the world like Polo's, but one that expands the latter's generic and geographical horizons to take in the closer and more familiar domain of the Palestine pilgrim. As such, as noted in the previous chapter, *The Book* represents a novel undertaking, an attempt at once bold and conservative to make a single work—an integrated textual world—out of the diverse geographical, religious, historical, and ethnographic material circulating in manuscript miscellanies devoted to both the biblical and the marvelous East.² The resulting composite work/world thus represents a kind of verbal analogue to the *Catalan Atlas* (1375), which combines and therefore redefines the practical portolan chart and the speculative Asian portion of such circular *mappaemundi* as the Ebstorf and Hereford maps. The principal difference between the two expansive compositions is that *The Book* (in its authorial form) retains the theological geography of those *mappaemundi* that give pride of place to Jerusalem and Paradise.

The *Mandeville*-author's first step in fashioning his new old eastern world is to fulfill the exordium's second promise by overwriting his textual analogue to the portolan chart: the German Dominican William of Boldensele's *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (1336), mostly in Jean le Long's slightly modified rendering, *Un traictie de lestat de la terre sainte* (1351). In a prefatory letter dated Michaelmas 1337, William calls this work "my little book . . . on the condition of the Holy Land" ("libellum meum . . . de statu terrae sanctae"), which it is; but it is also more than this. Not only does it treat the notion of Holy Land somewhat loosely, recording facts about numerous places between Constantinople and Egypt, and turning its attention on occasion to novelties like plantains, a giraffe, and three "living" elephants; it also organizes the traditional impersonal treatise on the holy places as a first-person narrative of the German pilgrim's own progress. Thus, in addition to being able to follow William's journey through such recurrent phrases as "after these things I saw/went" ("post haec vidi/perveni"), one can sometimes catch sight of his public persona as he laments a ruined church, draws attention to his diligence as a pilgrim, or quotes his Saracen interpreter's rebuke when he wants to visit the Dead Sea into which Sodom and Gomorrah had sunk: "You have come as a pilgrim in order to visit places blessed by God; you ought not to approach those that have deserved the curse of the Most High" ("Pro locis, quibus Deus benedixit, peregrinus venisti; non debes ad loca accedere, quae maledictionem Altissimi meruerunt").³

This pious, orderly, and sometimes personal narrative was used by the *Mandeville*-author as a template for roughly the first third of *The Book*, being overwritten in a fashion whose most striking results are examined in this and the next chapter. Working with a knowledge of William's entire "libellum" in mind (as the displacement of a few minor details reveals), Sir John's creator follows its itinerary step by step from Constantinople through Egypt and into the Holy Land, radically remaking it in two principal ways: by transforming the actual historical traveler into a generic pilgrim (the past-tense verbs of William's journey are all rendered in the present tense and the journey is depersonalized); and by splicing in so much material from other sources that the overwritten text is half as long again as the *Liber*, and thus qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from it.⁴

The resulting augmented itinerary is anything but "Mandeville's travels," then, as the modern title would have it: we never see Sir John on the road, and of his movements we learn only that he did not go to the Holy Land by way of Tartary. Potential rather than personal, *The Book*'s plotless verbal journey looks something like the traditional pilgrim's guide—except that its practical skeleton has been so thickly fleshed out with lore and stories, as well

as the odd "personal" experience of Sir John, that it disappears from view for long stretches, as in the opening visit to Constantinople, a lengthy episode that serves not only to reveal the full range of *The Book's* interests and concerns—geography, history, natural history, ethnography, theology, and Sir John's achievements and experiences—but also to place its composite world under the sign of Christian History by taking the audience proleptically to Jerusalem and the Earthly Paradise. Unlike John of Plano Carpini's memoir of his central Asian journey, which, as an ethnography, is organized around abstract categories, and unlike even Polo's *Divisament*, which attempts to offer the same type of information about each place it visits, *The Book* makes use of no ordering devices apart from the itinerary, leading its audience on a vicarious journey characterized by all sorts of surprises. Consequently, the text is capable of maintaining one's continued interest without demanding sustained attention, making it an ideal work for desultory reading: "In a word," as Tristram Shandy says of his own book, the "work is digressive, and it is progressive too,—and at the same time. . . . Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine;—they are the life, the soul of reading;—take them out of this book for instance,—you might as well take the book along with them."⁵

Sunshine though they may be, it would be impossible here to follow all of *The Book's* irradiant turns through the biblical East. The result would be a Borgesian map larger than the charted chiaroscuro territory itself, a map made still larger by even a limited survey of the significant features of other parts of the mandevillean multi-text. Accordingly, the present chapter examines only several exemplary instances of the *Mandeville*-author's revisionary passage through William of Boldensele's Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, as well as some of the revisions later made by *The Book's* translators.

The text's brief journey to the Palestine coast is important in that it both confirms and develops the expectations established in the opening visit to Constantinople, in part by introducing tall tales into the itinerary's subject matter, but it is the preceding and much longer visit that is especially important, since, as suggested above, it effectively presents the audience with a microcosm of the whole book, introducing not only the text's principal concerns, but also its characteristic rhetorical strategies and discursive modes. It is here, for instance, that Sir John explains why his pilgrim's guide recounts things that one might think irrelevant to "the matter of teaching the way" (people enjoy hearing about "choses estranges"), and that produce a multiple, marvelous, and (to modern eyes) contradictory world of "customs, manners, and diversities," where tolerance, piety, propaganda, and delight are expressed with equal enthusiasm. It is in Constantinople, too, that the question of *The Book's* more dubious truth claims poses itself for the first time, especially to

the critic or scholar who is reading with one eye on the *Mandeville*-author's underlying source—and a look at the different textual isotopes suggests that such readers may not be alone in suspecting the author of toying with the audience's good faith.

If anything unites the elements of *The Book's* copiously digressive passage through Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean (or for that matter the elements of the whole work), it is less a set of conceptual categories or principles of selection than a stylistic attitude. In Constantinople as elsewhere, *The Book* retails its "choses estranges" in a plain, mainly expository style that draws attention to the objects in question, not to the language in which they are embedded, as though all things were wonders requiring only to be noticed to be appreciated—a belief articulated by John de Dondis (fl. c. 1380) in a treatise on water resorts: "I have learned from long experience that there is nothing which is not marvellous. . . . if only we will examine it for a while."⁶

By and large, *The Book's* unobtrusive, accumulative style and its attendant spirit of quiet wonder survived translation, which is to say that its various isotopes likewise present the East—in this case Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean—as a fascinating geographical grabbag of objects, events, and persons. The sole exception is the Vulgate Latin Version, whose periphrastic, periodic prose style Carl Schönborn long ago praised at the expense of the original's "simplicity and awkwardness."⁷ (The English verse redactions also alter *The Book's* style, of course, but for quite different reasons.) What the present chapter reveals, confirming the claims of the previous chapter, is that this stylistic fidelity did not preclude an active engagement with the text's subject matter.

Customs, Manners, and Diversities, or Departures from Teaching the Way

After the deliberately formal opening of the authorial exordium, *The Book* begins for a second time, but swiftly now, in a manner that carries its newly constituted audience straight into its composite world. In the Continental and Insular Versions, this second beginning—the beginning "proper"—is signaled by the brief invocation of God quoted above, a conventional gesture that only the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions preserve. From God the text immediately turns to devotional travelers, taking scarcely a page to guide them to Constantinople "from the regions of the west, such as England, Ireland, Gaul, Scotland, or Norway" ("des parties doccident, come

Dengleterre, Dirland, de Gales, de Scoce, ou de Norwaye”). At the outset of this compressed itinerary, the text’s guiding “I”—the “impersonal Everyman who arranges and records truths” in a “general, authoritative voice”—states that he will notice only “some countries and principal places through which one must pass to take the right way” (“ascuns pais et lieux principaux par ou homme doit passer pur aler droite voie”), thus signaling already that *The Book* will offer both more and less than the pilgrim’s guide initially promised.⁸

Neither the one main itinerary nor the several subsidiary routes eventually traced to the Holy Land, for instance, provide intending pilgrims with a *carte routière* in the strict sense, whose most basic form—a list of places and distances—occurs in the fourth-century *Bordeaux Itinerary*. In addition, *The Book* contains no practical information, such as the advice given in Ludolph von Suchem’s itinerary (c. 1350) that Jerusalem pilgrims require papal approval to travel in infidel territory, or the still useful counsel given pilgrims in William Wey’s fifteenth-century “prevysyou”: “Also when ye com to dyuerse havynnys be wel ware of dyuerse frutys, for they be not acording to yowre complexioun, and they gender a bloody fluxe.”⁹

Instead of advice on distances, dispensations, or diarrhea—and such information is not commonplace in pilgrimage writings until the early fifteenth century—*The Book* will provide something else, something hinted at in the exordium: information about the earth and its inhabitants. While naming Hungary on its initial itinerary, for instance, the text not only registers it as a set of frontiers to be crossed, it also locates it in politico-geographical space, and praises the Hungarian king and his conquests. Similarly, after this brief digression on Hungarian rule, the text uses its arrival at the Danube to comment on the river’s source, tributaries, route, and remarkable effect on the Black Sea’s salinity within twenty leagues of its mouth—“that I believe,” adds Velser, “is ten German miles” (“Daz gelobe ich es syge zehen tútsche mile”), reminding medieval and modern audiences alike of the difficulties caused by the lack of a standard geographical measure.¹⁰

If *The Book* is initially to be a pilgrim’s guide, then, it is going to be one that speaks to vicarious travelers as well—perhaps even primarily. It would be a rare pilgrim indeed who could make use of an itinerary less concerned with the route itself than with, say, physical and political geography, imperial history, and remarkable natural phenomena. And these are not *The Book*’s only unpractical concerns en route to the Holy Land. As soon as it reaches Constantinople, the inaugural itinerary breaks off without explanation for some seven printed pages and the text turns its attention to, among other things, the Greek city’s wonders. The explanation for this digressive episode (epi -

eis - hodos, what comes in at the roadside) occurs only as the text returns to its now almost forgotten roadmap, with Sir John addressing the audience in his impersonal, authoritative voice:

Et combien qe cestes choses ne touchent a la matiere de chemyn enseigner, nient meins y touche a ceo qe iauoy promis a declarer, vne partie de costumes des maners et des diuersiteez dascuns pays. Et pur ceo qe ceo est la primere pais variant et discordant en foy et en lettres de nostre pais de cea, pur ceo lay icy mis, au fyn qe vous sachez la diuersite qest entre nostre creance et la leure; qar mult des gentz se delitent et y preignent solacz en oier parler des choses estranges. Ore retourneray ieo a mon chemyn deuiser.¹¹

And although these things do not touch on the matter of teaching the way, nevertheless it touches there on what I have promised to tell, a part of the customs, manners, and diversities of some countries. And because this is the first country varying and discordant in faith and in alphabet from our country over here, I have therefore set it here, so that you might know the diversity that exists between our belief and theirs; for many people delight and take pleasure in hearing talk about strange/foreign things. Now I shall return to describing my way.

Coming where it does, this *apologia pro devia sua* is a crucial passage, and all versions of *The Book* except the abbreviated Vulgate Latin and Bodley redactions retain it, transmitting it largely unchanged—although von Die-meringen’s Version, having made a similar claim about “choses estranges” in the exordium, reduces it to a reminder of Sir John’s “intention to speak about customs of foreign lands” (“Darumb das myn meynunge ist fremeder lande seden zu sagen”).¹² Rhetorically, the passage is not unusual, since it is one of many moments when the guiding “I” addresses a plural “you”—creating that powerful fiction of direct authorial address characteristic of many medieval writings—so as to keep the audience *au courant* with the work’s locally shifting intentions and attentions. Yet thematically, it is virtually unique, being almost the only time *The Book* is concerned with explaining its principles of selection: my account, Sir John is made to declare, will include not only the promised road map (the matter of teaching the way which, as we have seen, encompasses geography, politics, and nature), but “customs, manners, and diversities” as well (the stuff of ethnography, paradoxography, and travel writing), and these will be chosen above all for their difference from what is “ours”¹³—a difference first said to manifest itself in the still Christian empire of Greece. Moreover, and more significantly, the explanation assumes a world divided into a single “us” and a plural “them” in which “their” differences are regarded as pleasing and edifying rather than threatening, even when the differences are as basic as those of faith or language.

Visiting Constantinople, or Digressive Augmentation and Alphabetic Punctuation

No longer the great reliquary it had been before it was sacked and looted in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade and had its last great relics sold off soon after, Constantinople was still an important site to fourteenth-century Latin Christian pilgrims, whether as a sumptuous waystation for those on the overland route or as a rival imperial and religious center splendid enough to divert a sea-going traveler like William of Boldensele, whose text arrives there by a different route from the *Mandeville*-author's. After its own prologue in praise of Jerusalem, which has some points of contact with *The Book's*, William's *Liber* reaches Constantinople by way of an almost cinematic gesture: opening with the pilgrim's general itinerary by land and sea, the text passes quickly through a tripartite map that centers the Mediterranean relative to Asia, Africa, and Europe, and then offers both a panorama and a close-up of the marvelous city itself.¹⁴

Writing for clerical readers at the papal curia, the German Dominican not only describes and enumerates, but also celebrates Constantinople's imperial and Christian *Sehenswürdigkeiten*: its worthy sights, so to speak. From an overview of its situation, William works quickly through the city (defined by its beautiful churches and palaces) to the Hagia Sophia and the statue of its founder Justinian (Emperor from 527 to 565), before placing himself—by imperial order no less—alongside the Passion relics and numerous saints. Full of superlatives for the location, the city, and its Christian treasures alike, this compact and tidy account embodies in its very articulation the harmonious order (geographical, spatial, religious, and political) implicitly celebrated in it, passing easily from terrestrial geography through regional and urban topography to ekphrasis, before ending with a brief list that alludes to the pilgrim's own experiences. The overall result is a decorous yet potentially moving description of what William has seen on his visit to the New Rome, as he calls it, that will also establish his principal concerns (faith, power, history, wealth) and his personal authority as a pilgrim-author.

Built on this well-laid foundation and taking over virtually all of its elements, *The Book's* visit to Constantinople nevertheless looks nothing like it—perhaps because the *Mandeville*-author wanted not only to signal (implicitly) his independence from his underlying source, but also to conceal his dependence on it. Addressing a wider and possibly more credulous audience, he overwrites his source by dilating on almost everything but the attractions of the city, attempting to enlighten, describe, inform, explain, entertain, memorialize, moralize, and even boast a little on Sir John's behalf. In the process,

William's account grows to about seven times its original length, augmented by material drawn from the *Legenda aurea*, *Otia imperialia*, *Livres dou tresor*, *Speculum naturale*, *Historia Orientalis*, and the *Mandeville*-author's own imagination or experience.

The resulting reworked and partly "miscorrected" visit is sometimes as precise in its writing as the *Liber*, but it is nowhere near as orderly in its idiosyncratic, its "dream-wise," unfolding—even though here as elsewhere, the underlying source and the other material have been interwoven with such "easy and unobtrusive" control that one forgets about the general indifference to form. Indeed, anyone wondering why the English Knight's "memoir" was more popular with medieval audiences than Polo's has only to compare *The Book's* passage through Constantinople with the *Divisament's* account of Armenia, its first stop after Rustichello's introductory narrative. Unlike in Polo's memoir, where much of the text consists of unvaried itemizing description, "scientific [and other] information" in *The Book* "is subordinated to the dramatic possibilities of the subject matter"—or more accurately, it is quite often cast in narrative form, making it more attractive as well as more memorable.¹⁵

Thus, as *The Book* arrives at Constantinople, it makes no mention of the city's geographical location or its many churches, briefly noticing instead that it is the Greek emperor's seat, before pointing out the Hagia Sophia, describing the statue of Justinian, and listing the Passion relics according to the outline in William's *Liber*. Having named the relics (but ignored the saints' bodies), the text does not leave Constantinople for the site of Troy, as the Dominican's itinerary does. Rather, it offers its audience several legends about the Cross, thereby taking them proleptically to Jerusalem (and the Earthly Paradise), and then tells of the Passion relics in the King's chapel in France—a shift of geographical focus that links the West with the Center and the farthest East even as it leads into an account of the Crown of Thorns, during which the relevant portions of the Passion are retold and Sir John says what he himself saw in Constantinople and Paris.

Following the double digression on the Passion relics, the text briefly mentions the previously ignored saints' bodies and other relics, moves on to examine a curious vessel called "enydros" (properly displaced from elsewhere in the *Liber*), and then turns to the description of the city's location with which William's account opens, adding to it his sketch of Troy's locality, before widening its scope to take in the islands around Greece, the many languages and countries under the Greek Emperor, Alexander the Great's birthplace, Aristotle's tomb, and the marvelous heights of Mounts Olympus and Athos. This temporary excursion complete, the text mentions the Greek em-

peror's palace and hippodrome, and then returns to the Hagia Sophia to recount a legend about the discovery there of a body (said to be that of "Hermes le sage") which had been buried with a gold plate testifying in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin to a belief in Christ two thousand years before the fact. With the mention of belief, the text embarks on an overview of the ways in which the Greeks are Christian but vary from "nostre droite creance," the summary being capped with a reproduction of the Greek alphabet: "And if you would know about their abc, which letters they have, you can see them here with the names that they call them" ("Et si vous veuillez sauoir de lour a. b. c., quelles lettres ils ount, icy les poez veer ouesques les nouns qils les appellent").¹⁶

Placed as it is right before the *apologia* for the long Constantinopolitan passage on "things [that] do not touch on the matter of teaching the way," the Greek alphabet has an important structural, rhetorical, and thematic function: it serves as a kind of punctuation mark that is also an ethnographic mark of similarity in difference. Just as its placement signals the end of the larger textual section, so its representation on the page not only suggests that *The Book's* first "others" resemble "us" in being literate, it dissolves the text into a list of foreign names and letters that cannot be parsed (nor usually even recognized), but must be seen as icons of the distance, difference, and diversity that Sir John defines as his other concern in the subsequent apology.

What makes this sort of multipurpose punctuation mark especially significant is the fact that the *Mandeville*-author repeats it another five times: placing the "Egyptian" alphabet at the end of the visit to Egypt, the "Jewish" between the descriptions of Samaria and Galilee in the Holy Land, the "Saraacen" at the end of the account of Islam that closes the pilgrim's guide, and the "Persian" and the "Chaldean" near each other early in the passage beyond the Holy Land. The author's use of this variable—and partly fabricated—alphabetic punctuation in *The Book's* first sections irrefutably confirms that "diversity, difference, [and] the bewildering variety of 'marvellous things'" are an important concern from the outset,¹⁷ while the placement of the last two alphabets suggests that the ideological boundary between the pilgrim's world and the curious traveler's is not so sharp as some would claim. That the author invented not a single alphabet for any of the still farther eastern peoples said to be literate certainly looks curious in this context—and the Liège redactor noticed the gap, since he added three alphabets, those of Tartary, Cathay, and Prester John's Land¹⁸—but it may have to do with a desire to minimize some forms of difference, since many of the presumptively authorial text's far-eastern sections are devoted to revealing fundamental homologies in radically different religious practices.

Historical Exempla and the Limits of Good Faith

Religious differences are, as already noted, an important part of *The Book's* matter at Constantinople, and I return to the topic later in this chapter. At present, I want to look at *The Book's* first subject on reaching Constantinople, the statue of Justinian in front of the Hagia Sophia, since with it the *Mandeville*-author not only recalls the theme of Christian expansion raised in the exordium but also sets the tone of his book and—to the scholarly reader—reveals his characteristic mode of overwriting his underlying source by giving its data and descriptions narrative form, turning them into small and sometimes moralizing stories which, it could be argued, toy with the audience's good faith.

In William's *Liber*, Justinian's statue is described toward the end of the decorous word-painting of Constantinople, after the former emperor has been celebrated for founding the "pretiosissima ecclesia." In *The Book*, however, the statue is depicted as soon as the text arrives in Constantinople. This simple displacement necessarily gives the imperial religious monument greater prominence, and the *Mandeville*-author uses its prominence to good effect, expanding his source in an unforgettable way. Here, first, is the shared matter of the two texts, where we can already see a subtle change laying the ground for *The Book's* memorably augmented account:¹⁹

Liber. En [Latin: "coram"] ceste eglise est limage de lempereur justinnien qui la fonda et est a cheval de metal fondu et a la couronne dor sur le chief *en sa senestre [main]* tient une ronde pomme qui signifie et represente le monde dont il estoit sires, la destre tient lence et estendue vers orient comme menassant les rebelles.

Book. Et deuant celle esglise est lymage Justinien lempereur, coeuere dor [et est ycelui ymage de cuyure dore]; et est a chial coronez. Et *soleit tenir vn pomme rounde dooree en sa mayn.* . . . Et lautre mayn il tient leuee contre lorient, en signe de manacer les malfaitours.

In [before] this church is the image of the emperor Justinian who founded it and is on a horse cast of metal and with a gold crown on his head; *in his left [hand]* he holds a round apple that signifies and represents the world of which he was lord; the right holds a spear and extends eastwards as if threatening the rebels.

And before this church is the image of Justinian the emperor, covered with gold [and this image is of gilded bronze], and he is crowned on a horse. And *he used to hold a round apple of gold in his hand.* . . . And the other hand he holds up against the east, as a sign to threaten the malefactors.

In Jean le Long's rendering, which modifies details but does not undo William's emphases, the *Liber* presents the statue of the "sanctissimus impera-

tor" as a symbol of wealth, power, and resistance to eastern insurgency (never mind that Justinian was himself a kind of eastern insurgent, as the the Defective and Egerton Versions perhaps recognize by raising his hand against the *west*).²⁰ In *The Book* this significance remains, but it is decisively subordinated to another meaning, which emerges in the space marked by the ellipsis above, enabled by the change of "holds" to "used to hold." As it passes through the *Mandeville*-author's refabricating hands, William's static ekphrasis becomes an exemplum on the subject of (Christian) empire, one of *The Book's* abiding concerns:

mes [la pomme] piecea est cheue fors. Et ceo dit homme qe signefie ceo qe lempour ad perdu grant partie de sa terre et de sa seignurie. Qar il soleit estre Emperour de Romanie et de Grieece et de tote Asye la moindre [la meilleur], de [toute] la terre de Sirie, de la terre de Iudee, en la quelle est Ierusalem, et de la terre de Egipte, de Persye, et Darabe; mes il ad tot perdu, fors Grieece et le pais qil se tient soulement. *Et ascuns ount quidez plusours foythz a remettre le pomme en le mayn, mes elle ne [se] veolt tenir.* Celle pome signifioit la seignurie qil auoit sur le monde qest roundez.

but [the apple] has fallen out. And this they say signifies that the emperor has lost a large part of his land and of his seignury. For he used to be Emperor of Romania and of Greece, of all Asia the less [the greater], of [all] the land of Syria, of the land of Judea in which Jerusalem is, and of the land of Egypt, of Persia, and of Arabia; but he has lost all but Greece and the country that he holds only. *And some have thought many times to replace the apple into the hand, but it will not hold it.* This apple signifies the seignury that he had over the world that is round.

It may be that this exemplum simply belongs to the common stock of *de casibus* stories told by Boccaccio and Chaucer's Monk, among others, and so has mainly to do with what Montégut calls "la tristesse de ce fantôme d'empire," but in my view it has more to do with *The Book's* continuing reflections on the shrunken and fractured state of Christendom while the world as a whole is up for grabs, potentially open to *Latin* Christian expansion, since (the text suggests) the Greek empire will not be restored. The story is at any rate analogous to one related in the mid-twelfth-century *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* about a giant idol erected by Muhammad, the idol holding in its right hand a key that will fall out when the king is born in France who is destined to restore Christianity in Spain.²¹ The exemplum itself is not glossed in this way, of course, but in the larger context of *The Book* such a reading is possible, since the text will several times tell its religiously defined audience that the world, and not just its geographical center in Judea, could be theirs, if only they would reform themselves.

Curiously, this characteristic Mandevillean exemplum may have had its roots in reality, for it seems that in 1317 the “world” did fall out of Justinian’s hand, being knocked free in a storm, and the damage was not repaired until 1325; the memory of this event, moreover, was alive in Constantinople a century later, when Pero Tafur passed through and recorded it in his *Travels*. If so, if the exemplum does derive from a real event, it may mean that the *Mandeville*-author actually traveled to the city, as one scholar has argued. Yet even so, the story clearly has nothing to do with establishing his (or Sir John’s) presence there; nor is it adequate to say that it “may be *merely* a distorted version of the accident in 1317” or that it represents an “aesthetically justified ‘lie’.”²²

If there is any significance to the connection between probable event and improbable text, it lies rather in the way in which the event has been textually transformed: it has been moralized. Such moralizing is a typical medieval gesture, of course, and the exemplum is a typical medieval genre; but the moralizing is also a consequence of the statue’s passage from described object to narrative subject. As Hayden White has argued, the use of narrative, “certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality.”²³ In the present case, as in *The Book*’s many other such anecdotes, the story moralizes reality by making it exemplary, by turning it into material for critical reflection.

Not surprisingly, critics and scholars have had trouble knowing what to make of this sort of exemplary mandevillean play with the truth of history and their good faith as readers. One of the more common strategies, which goes back to Montégut’s 1889 essay—viewing *The Book* as a “*literary* hoax”—allows one to salvage the *Mandeville*-author’s evident mendacities by placing them and the entire work under the sign of the aesthetic. Yet as Greenblatt has argued, there may be “something at once misleading and sentimental about this saving invocation of art,” since it requires us to distance *The Book*, its unlocated author, and its readers not only from the text’s own truth claims, but from history and literary history: better, then, perhaps to accept that “there is something disturbing in this work, a toying with trust, an undermining of propriety.”²⁴

Greenblatt’s critique of redemptive aesthetic readings, illuminating as they have indisputably been, strikes me as persuasive. Less so, however, is his claim that we cannot decide what “the nature and source of the text’s claim on the [medieval] reader” are, “because the ontological categories and institutional structures that are implicit in such questions were themselves only in the process of being formed, the object more of exploration than of dog-

matic assertion."²⁵ Such instabilities and explorations are easy to find in the fourteenth century, especially in questioning figures like Chaucer and Ockham. But they are also a feature of every historical moment, the consequence of the long-standing border disputes that are a central fact—perhaps the central fact—of cultural production, transmission, and reception. Accordingly, one can grant Greenblatt's assertion its cautionary force—*caveat lector*—and yet think it possible to broach the hard question of the text's truth claims by looking to three sorts of evidence: cultural norms and practices, the text's own rhetorical strategies, and their reception in transmission.

There are, for example, many medieval texts that violate the good faith supposedly governing their potentially imperial sway over readers by presenting as true what is only partly so, or not even so. Medieval writers and thinkers, of course, accepted that history and fiction were not the same, but, perhaps because of their faith in a single, authoritative Truth, they often adapted material to suit either the already known nature of Reality or their own ideological purposes, even going so far as to forge documents on a grand scale in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In addition, medieval assumptions about the truth- and use-value of stories can differ from those made in later centuries. The stories of Troy, Alexander, Arthur, Charlemagne, or various saints, for example, or even of Christianity itself (as in the Corpus Christi plays) were often told in ways that blur the distinction between story and history, and these blurred accounts could be filled not simply with fact, fiction, and fancy, but with copious information and moralizing as well—as though in the final analysis deeds and doers were of interest for their didactic or ethical significance, like the variously sacred, mythical, historical, and fictive figures in Dante's *Commedia*. "Whether it is the truth of history or fiction doesn't matter," John Bromyard advised in his late fourteenth-century *Summa predicantium*, making a distinction that goes back at least to Augustine, "because the *example* is not supplied for its own sake, but for its signification"—and this is doubtless no less true when the preacher presents himself as a layman and ascends the pulpit in a "traveler's memoir."²⁶

As for *The Book's* (or its author's) intention to deceive, it must be admitted that the text engages in much deception, especially concerning the figure of Sir John. Yet if we look again at the exemplum of Justinian, we can see that the story is told not so much to deceive as to mean: to prompt reflection. Here, as so often, the *Mandeville*-author uses an elementary but effective rhetorical device to alert his audience to the fact that the text is making a claim without necessarily vouching for it—having it both ways, as it were, and thus inviting readers and listeners to use their own judgment on the matter. This device, the simplest form of the commonplace medieval strategy of inventing

authorities to bolster truth claims or allow the text some freedom of invention, is the phrase “they say” (“dit homme”), and the author makes use of it precisely as he transforms William’s static ekphrasis into a moving exemplum of loss: “And this *they say* signifies . . .”

At least some of *The Book’s* early intermediaries recognized what it was up to here, adding distancing touches of their own to the exemplum. The Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions, for instance, all give the crucial phrase as “men seyn *there*,” determined that the audience should not miss the point, while the Velser Version goes still further in its attempt to keep the audience undeceived, although its poor telling of the exemplum partly undoes the good intention: the apple, this version relates, “long ago fell out of [Justinian’s] hand, and will not be placed in his hand any more. And *the Greeks maintain* that it means that the emperor has lost his power and land” (“Es ist aber vor langer zytt im uß der hand gefallen, und wil in nit me in der hand heben. Und *gehent die Kriechen* das es betútt das der kayßer sin macht und land verlorn hab”). Even the reduced Bodley Version, which fastens on anecdotes above all else, keeps the “dit homme” while rewriting the exemplum to make the apple’s fall a *prophetic* sign: “And that ilke ymage was wont to holde in oon of his hondis an appille of golde, the wiche aftirwarde fille out of his honde be the seluen, withouten mevyng of wynde or garynge of man. And that fallinge *men seiden* shulde be token gret losse that was comande to the emperoure. And so it bifelle aftirwarde.” Only the Vulgate Latin Version omits the rhetorical disclaimer entirely, perhaps counting on its educated readers to recognize an “example” when they see one: the orb, it asserts, has “long since fallen from [the statue’s] hand, a sign that the Emperor had lost his lordship over many lands” (“quae [sphaera] iam diu e manu sua sibi cecidit, in signum quod Imperator multarum terrarum dominium perdidit”).²⁷

Yet even as it avoids using a disclaimer like “ut dicunt,” the Vulgate Latin Version reveals itself trying to make the exemplum more likely, to give it an air of verisimilitude. It does so by omitting the one detail that comes from the pleasing realm of romance rather than the instructive world of history: the statue’s refusal to hold the replaced apple. Von Diemeringen’s related and usually more credulous rendering keeps this romance detail, but likewise alters the legend with a “naturalizing” gesture, if now in a positive rather than a negative way. Thus in one manuscript, “the apple was *removed* from his hand *or fell out* of it” (“der appel ist jm uss der hant *genomen* *adir* ist jm *daruss gefallen*”), while in another, it was “*stolen*” (“*gestolen*”; the Rawlinson copy of the Bodley Version quoted above raises similar possibilities—“mevyng of wynde or garynge of man”—only to conjure them away). In both of these German manuscripts, moreover, the text recounts the rest of the legend as

The Book tells it, but twice uses the rhetorical disclaimer “they say,” whereas the Continental and Insular Versions use it only once.²⁸

If changes such as these do represent “naturalizing” gestures, then it may be that modern readers are not alone in suspecting the *Mandeville*-author of sometimes playing with the audience’s good faith, even where rhetorically the text asks for a little license. Conversely, it may be that some early readers found *The Book* to be pushing the limits of the likely in places—these limits being not only cultural and historical, but geographical, since although distance often turns up what would be unusual at home, Constantinople was probably too close for some to countenance statues with a will of their own. Whatever the answer, *The Book* in all its versions remains capable of disturbing at least modern notions of discursive propriety, and there is much about it that eludes our grasp, challenging our capacity to understand it on its own contradictory terms. Indeed, there are even moments when *The Book* appears to do so deliberately, as when the *Mandeville*-author has Sir John challenge sceptics to disbelieve his account of the Great Khan’s world: “qi voudra, il me crerra, si ly plest, et qi ne voudra, il sen lerra” (“whoever wants to will believe me, if it pleases him, and whoever does not will go wrong”).²⁹

If we are to try then to come to terms with *The Book*’s often misleading truth claims—its breaches of good faith—we have to read according to the principle articulated in 1681 by Jean Mabillon, which asks scholars to judge documents “not by one but by every element and criterion possible.” Thus, if judged by its false claims as such, *The Book* reveals that its author, like Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, sometimes “played with truth,” blurring the already blurred line between the factual and the fabulous to suit his own ends; but if judged by those claims in their rhetorical articulation and formal placement or in the light of their source(s), the text shows that the *Mandeville*-author, like Geoffrey, “also played with techniques of research,” with ways of making a credible and useful as well as a diverting world out of others’ texts.³⁰

Jerusalem and Paradise: A Reliquary Digression

In William’s *Liber*, as noted above, the description of Justinian’s statue is followed by a sentence about the Passion relics and saints’ bodies that the Dominican saw “by order of his majesty the emperor” (“ex mandato domini imperatoris”), after which text and traveler proceed to the former site of Troy—a journey that the *Mandeville*-author delays by turning William’s closing sentence into an extended homiletic history and devotional meditation that

take the audience proleptically to Jerusalem and (briefly) to the Earthly Paradise. One learns here, for instance, not only how some monks on Cyprus misrepresent the cross of Dismas the good thief as the true Cross in order to bring in more offerings, but also how and why the Jews made the Cross of four types of wood; how Jesus was crucified; how the Greek scriptures tell of Seth's quest to the Earthly Paradise for the three (sic) seeds that gave rise to the different woods of the Cross; how the Jews hid the Cross until St. Helen found it; what relics the French king possesses and how he got them; how the Crown of Thorns was made; how Sir John has seen it many times and has a thorn, which was given him "pur grande especialtee"; how Jesus was crowned twice by the Jews; and how Sir John has seen the spearhead in both Paris and Constantinople.³¹

It is possible that this digressive tour de force was inspired by le Long's fleshing out of William's list of relics with a few realizing details that transform static objects into the props of a well known drama. The phrase "also the sponge, the reed" ("item spongiam, calamum"), for example, becomes "the sponge with which he was given drink on the cross and the reed on which it was placed" ("lesponge dont il fu abreuvee en la croix et le roussel sur quoy elle fu fichee")—a transformation which the *Mandeville*-author makes still more memorably real, confirming Howard's claim that his "art is one of vivid, precise detail and forthright statement": "the sponge and reed with which they gave him gall and vinegar to drink on the cross" ("lesponge et larundine a quoi homme luy donoit a boire fiel et aigre vin en la croiz"). Nor incidentally did the supplementation stop here; *The Book's* intermediaries also added "theologizing" details of their own. The Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Velser Versions, for example, all state that "the Jews" gave Jesus the gall and vinegar, while the Bodley Version's Rawlinson copy adds the catechetical comment "whenne he was dooen vpon the cros for our sake."³²

Yet even if le Long's rendering of the *Liber* did inspire the *Mandeville*-author's expansion of his source, we have to ask why he augmented it so fully here (the reliquary account occupies almost half of the visit to Constantinople and is nearly twice as long as the exposition of Greek Christian beliefs that leads into the *apologia* for digressing from the pilgrim's guide), especially since it contains much material that one would expect to find in the account of Jerusalem. The answer immediately suggested by the text itself is that the author wanted to achieve several important rhetorical and thematic ends as soon as possible: to win the audience over by offering them serious material that is at once familiar and fresh; to satisfy the appetite for "diversities" noted in the *apologia*; to transmit a wide range of information and teach doctrine in a delightful and memorable way; to reveal his literary talents; and to establish

the authority, didactic largesse, and piety of his chivalric representative, while perhaps engaging in a little one-upmanship as well—if Sir John cannot quite compete with Seth's accomplishments as a traveler, having (he later says) been "unworthy" to reach Paradise, he can at least overgo William as a privileged pilgrim by receiving the gift of a relic almost as "virtuous" as angel's seeds and able to bring him into contact, as it were, with the Passion.³³

There is perhaps another and more important reason, however, why the *Mandeville*-author might have chosen to begin Sir John's "memoirs" as he does, and that reason has to do with *The Book's* depiction of the diverse eastern world so as to console, castigate, and challenge its Christian audience, to divert them somewhat from the troubles of their own western world while also offering hope and urging reform. Thus, just as the author uses the opening itinerary to signal the text's interest in the earth both in itself and as a humanly organized space, so he uses the initial visit to Constantinople to emphasize *The Book's* concern with the earth as the expansive site of Christian History, as a historical and ultimately unified space arranged around an existing, approachable center that was also a universal turning point, and stretching east toward an actual, unattainable periphery that was also a common beginning. Although itself not a single narrative, the reliquary account, like *The Book* as a whole, clearly depends on one, and this narrative—the at once linear and circular Christian story—is used here as it will be used elsewhere: to link past and present, East and West. What is at stake in the displaced Jerusalem discourse, then, is a vision of the "universal world": an overarching scheme within which the East's marvelous abundance of customs, manners, and diversities can be contained, made sense of, and contemplated with calm pleasure rather than bewilderment or fear, and for secular and spiritual instruction rather than distraction or condemnation.

Latins, Greeks, and Jews, or Variety and Discordance in Faith

If this is so, then *The Book's* opening reliquary account must be seen as propaganda, as an attempt to shape the audience's attitudes toward the world through which they are being guided step by step. The strong current of anti-Jewish feeling that runs through the Jerusalem discourse is particularly striking in this respect, especially when seen against the subsequent presentation of the differences between the Latin and Greek Churches. Although the negative comments on the Jews here seem to be made in the same chauvinistic spirit as the exordium's references to the "misbelievers" who possess the Holy

Land, they prove to be out of keeping with *The Book's* depiction of variety and discordance in faith and thus, in retrospect, stand out all the more sharply.

Derived mainly from Jacques de Vitry's partisan *Historia Orientalis*, *The Book's* exposition of the Greek faith is distinguished by the same apparent impartiality that characterizes all its accounts of religious difference, and this despite the signal sent in its opening statement: "And although the Greeks are Christians, nevertheless they depart much from *our right belief*" ("Et, combien qe les Gregeois soient Cristiens, totefoithz ils varient mult de *nostre droite creance*"). Contrary to the expectations established by this remark—which the Vulgate Latin Version further strengthens by rendering "nostre droite creance" as "nostra vera fides Catholica"—*The Book* neither judges nor attacks Greek variance; it simply describes the differences, whether on the *filiouque* controversy or the form of the eucharistic bread. To be sure, a statement such as "they say that fornication is not a mortal sin, that it is something natural" ("Et dient qe fornicacioun nest pas pecche mortel, ancis est chose naturele") implies a judgment, but the only overt judgment here has to do with practice, not belief, and it quickly widens to take in the Latin Church as well:

Et dient qe vsure nest mie pecche mortel. Et vendent les beneficez de *seintez* esglises, et si fait homme maintenant autre part; de quoi ceo est damages et grant esclandre. Qar au iour de huy est Simon roi coronnez en seinte esglise. Dieu le veulle amender; qar tant come seinte esglise chancelle et clouche, le poeple [le monde] ne poet estre en bon estat.³⁴

And they say usury is not a mortal sin. And they sell benefices of holy churches, and so does one now elsewhere; whereby this is harmful and a great scandal. For today Simon is crowned king in holy church. God shall repair it; for as much as holy church staggers and limps, the people [world] cannot be in good shape.

Set off thus early in *The Book*, this squib fired sideways at the Latin Church not only echoes the exordium's critique of princes for fighting over territorial inheritances; it also anticipates a theme that resounds later in the text: the importance of proper practice in religious matters, regardless of belief, such that piety and devotion are said in effect to compensate for theological error. In addition to the thematic concern, the quoted passage reveals a rhetorical strategy increasingly employed as the text moves farther east: the use of the Other as a Self-critical mirror, often so that there is no interest in the Other as such.

So common is this strategy and so successful has it been that *The Book's* modern readers have often overlooked those few moments when the Other remains the focus of criticism, especially in the case of the Jews, who are

represented throughout with a paradoxically matter-of-fact hostility that borders on paranoia.³⁵ The Jews, as we have seen, make the first of their several negative appearances in *The Book* during the visit to Constantinople, where their anti-Christian activities, their legendary past practice, is the issue (Jewish belief is noticed only once in the entire work, in a passing remark during the lengthy exposition of Saracen beliefs discussed in the next chapter). These Truth-attacking activities include the ingenious manufacture of the cross (for which von Diemeringen’s Version calls them “die falschen juden,” “the false Jews”), its concealment, and the mocking and crowning of Jesus, where they are shown pressing the Crown of Thorns down so forcefully that “the [precious] blood ran in many places over his face, over his neck, and and over his shoulders” (“le [precieux] sang curroit en plusours lieux par la face, par le col, et par ses espauls”). Indeed, by the time they appear in this last scene, *The Book*’s pseudo-historical antagonists have become bad enough to deserve the title “les felons Iuys” or “les ribaldz Iuys”—a characterization omitted in most redactions, which otherwise accept or enhance all but the *The Book*’s most extreme anti-Jewish propaganda.³⁶ The negative representation of the Jews is, to be sure, commonplace in medieval writing, but one has to note that it is altogether absent from William’s *Liber*, which is concerned with the recent spread of Muslim power in the Levant, not with Jewish resistance more than a millennium ago to Jesus or the spread of Christianity.

Given as much, one has also to note the obvious problem with the redemptive view of *The Book* and its author advanced by Bennett and generally accepted by those who defend the one as fiction and the other as an artist: “Mandeville never descends to the level of propaganda. He is writing for the entertainment of a cultured audience, not preaching or persuading,” and accordingly has produced “a serious . . . very scholarly . . . very moral book, not because it preaches morality, but because it is the expression of a gentle and charitable mind—a mind free from prejudice and malice, and open with natural gaiety of such freedom.”³⁷ The problem with this aestheticizing claim is that it refuses *The Book* its own historical otherness, its sometimes unpleasant contradictions, attempting to resolve them in a belletristic ecumenism, an untrammelled artistic delight in diversity, which speaks to the likeminded across the centuries. As the accounts of the Passion relics and the Greek Church show, however, charity, prejudice, hatred, piety, and tolerance—no less than entertainment, instruction, Self-criticism, and propaganda—are perfectly compatible with each other in *The Book*’s composite world.

Canceling the Contradictions in Constantinople: The Vulgate Latin Version

Significantly, most of *The Book's* translators appear to have been untroubled by the apparent contradictions of its world, since with one striking exception they did nothing to make it more harmonious. That exception is the Vulgate Latin redactor, whose basic recasting of the *Mandeville*-author's prose style has been mentioned already. Unlike the other intermediaries, he assiduously undoes the text's digressions and contradictions, beginning his own overwriting with the opening itinerary and the visit to Constantinople. Whereas the others intervene only to modify specific details in the spirit of the two authorial versions (or in the case of the Bodley Version, to omit some of the less wonderful details), the Latin redactor omits and rearranges material, gathering like material together and often contradicting his source.

The resulting counter-version thus resembles William's *Liber* more than it does *The Book*, especially in its tidier *forma tractandi*. Among other things, the Vulgate Latin Version omits the long reliquary digression, and with it the proleptic journey to Jerusalem and Paradise (the Bodley Version, in contrast, simply condenses the passage, mainly by cutting the anti-Jewish propaganda), returning the topographical description of Constantinople to the visit's beginning, presumably on the principle that an overview of the whole ought to precede an enumeration of the parts. By the same token, the text also displaces its abridged exemplum of Justinian's statue toward the end of the visit, where the statue's raised arm ("velut in signum cominationis ad Orientales infideles"; "as though threatening the Eastern infidel") introduces the miscellaneous information about such matters as Aristotle's tomb, Mt. Athos, Hermes the Wiseman's prophetic belief in Jesus Christ (which story actually expands somewhat in the Latin), and the closing summary of Greek beliefs, now a concise, orthodox exposition without the punctuating alphabet and the final apology. The Greeks, it says, "are Christian, and baptized, but nevertheless vary in some articles of their faith from our true Catholic faith, and differ in many of their rites from the rites of the Roman Church, because they have long since ceased to obey the Roman Pontiff" ("sunt Christiani, & baptizati, tamen variant singuli in aliquo articulo fidem suam a nostra vera fide Catholica, & diversificant in multis suos ritus a ritibus Romanæ Ecclesiæ, quia iamdudum omiserunt obedire Pontifici Romano").³⁸

The Vulgate Latin Version's enhanced orthodoxy also extends to its remade expositor, who is now as openly devout as any pious pilgrim:

In Constantinopoli habentur . . . preciosissima Crux Christi, seu maior pars illius, & tunica inconsutilis, cum spongia & arundine, & uno clavorum, & dimidia parte coro-

nae spineae, cuius altera medietas servatur in Capella Regis Franciae, Parisiis. Nam & ego indignus diligenter pluribus vicibus respexi partem utramque: dabatur quoque mihi de illa Parisiis unica spina, quam usque nunc preciose conservo.

In Constantinople are kept . . . the most precious Cross of Christ, or the larger part of it, and the seamless tunic, with the sponge and the reed, and one of the nails, and half the crown of thorns, whose other half is preserved in the King of France's Chapel in Paris. For I, too, unworthy, have many times in each place gazed attentively on both parts: and I was given a thorn of the Paris crown, which I have guarded preciously until now.

Though not without its captivating moments, then, the Vulgate Latin Version's visit to Constantinople is typical of its overwritten whole in that it lacks the surprising turns that give *The Book's* fuller versions their appealing liveliness; still, the abridged redaction does offer its learned audience a judicious tidiness that probably made it a more useful text for those readers more concerned—as, for example, renaissance cosmographers were—to acquire information about distant places than to hear stories about them.

Eros Awry: Telling Tall Tales

The Vulgate Latin redactor's resistance notwithstanding, *The Book's* ability to keep both medieval and modern audiences interested in its description of the world owes much to the small narratives that emerge at irregular intervals from its instructive itinerary. Some of them, like those related in Constantinople, serve obvious didactic, devotional, and propagandistic aims, but others seem to have been included chiefly for the pleasure they give, even if they often issue in a tacit moral as well. Among the most striking and characteristic of such free-standing stories are the two marvelous "historical" legends about eros gone awry which the *Mandeville*-author interpolates into William's passage from Constantinople to the Palestine coast, since even more than the exemplum of Justinian's statue they both derive from the shadowy world where romance couples with folklore. Indeed, their crepuscular quality appears all the more striking because of their placement following the brief notice of a "truly" ("verayement") existing "grant merueille" at St. John the Evangelist's tomb on the Turkish mainland: although the tomb holds "nothing but manna" because John has been "translate en Paradys," the earth there "collapses and moves" ("crouler et mouoire") as if "vn homme vif" were underneath.³⁹

Of the two legends, the second is the more obviously exemplary, and, in company with the religious marvel of John's tomb, perhaps serves to con-

tain the apparently fictional tale which precedes it and which I discuss more fully below: that of a “damoiselle bele” transformed into a dragon and awaiting the knight brave enough to kiss her on the mouth and restore her to human form. Loosely recalling the legend of the Gorgon’s head, the other and more moral tall tale concerns the devastation of Satalia (or Adalia) on the mainland opposite Cyprus “through the folly of a young man” (“par la folie dun ieofne homme”). Young men being what they are in life and legend, this unnamed figure loves another earthly creature to excess, and his love leads him into a necrophiliac union out of which a city-destroying head is born. This story is told with notable brevity, but was still too long as well as too unseemly for the Vulgate Latin redactor (the only intermediary not to translate it), who evidently thinks another activity more heinous than necrophilia: Satalia “is said”—there is no qualification in the French—“to have perished as Sodom once did, on account of a singular crime against nature committed by a petulant young man” (“[Sathalia] sicut olim Sodoma dicitur periisse, propter unicum crimen contra naturam a quodam Iuvene petulante commissum”).⁴⁰ Paradoxically, this periphrastic delicacy works to obscure not only the legend’s obscenity but also its moral force.

At once less obscene and less moral, the first and longer legend, the unhappy story of Hippocrates’ daughter, partly resembles the Melusine and “bold kiss” stories, as well as *The Book’s* own later story of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk in little Armenia, which concerns a “bele dame de Fayrie” who grants the first wish of anyone keeping a long and sleepless watch over the bird, and which ends with this telling comment: “This is not the right way to go to the regions that I have named above; but whoever would see these marvels can take it,” or in the Egerton redactor’s subtler rendering, “he þat will see swilk meruailles, him behoues sum tyme þus wende oute of þe way” (“Ceo nest mie la droit chemin pur aler as parties qe iay desuis nomez; mes qi vorroit veoir celles merueilles, il [le] purroit faire”). In contrast to this later legend, the story of Hippocrates’ daughter is introduced (rather than closed) with a more obvious rhetorical disclaimer:

Et puis passe par la isle de Cohos et par lisle de Langho, des quelles isles Ypocras fuist sires. Et *dit homme* qen celle isle de Langho est vncore la file Ypocras en guise dun graunt dragoun, qad bien c. toises de long, *si come lem dit, qar ieo ne lay veu*. Et *cils del isle lappellent* la Dame de pais.⁴¹

And then one passes by the island of Cohos and by the island of Langho, of which islands Hippocrates was lord. And *they say* that Hippocrates’ daughter is still on this island of Langho in the shape of a great dragon that is a good one hundred fathoms long, *or so they say, for I have not seen it*. And *those of the island call her* Lady of the country.

This is of course not the only time that Sir John will admit to trafficking in hearsay or having failed to see something himself—such admissions being rhetorically useful—but its placement so early in *The Book* does prompt one to ask why the *Mandeville*-author would have overwritten William's itinerary with such an apparently irrelevant, not to say irreverent, story: coming as it does right after the apology for digressing into "choses estranges," this local legend, like the one recounted about Satalia, both reinforces and supplements the already established expectations about *The Book*'s heterogeneous nature and capacious extent—incidentally disproving the common recent view that the *Mandeville*-author's "taste for romancing" grew as he went and took "bolder flight" only when the text passes beyond the biblical East.⁴²

With respect to *The Book*'s manner, the leisurely telling of the marvelous story between two briefer legends reveals that the digressive *forma tractandi* of the inaugural visit to Constantinople is to be the norm, and thus that the ostensible generic "dominant" (the instructive itinerary) is to be dominated by various smaller genres, often didactic and typically narrative, of greater interest to medieval (and modern) audiences than an unadulterated pilgrim's guide.⁴³ Similarly, with respect to *The Book*'s subject matter, the legend reveals that already at the fluid and not too distant boundaries of Latin Christendom the world is copious, plural, marvelous, and contradictory, and that its inhabited spaces are defined not only by whatever Christian tradition recognizes, but also by everything that various local traditions—as "recalled" by Sir John—say about them.

By the time the originally projected pilgrim's guide reaches Langho and Satalia, then, the *Mandeville*-author has demonstrated that its world will be presented as the capacious site not only of divinely scripted History with its orthodox *miracula* and *mirabilia*, but also of variously scattered "choses estranges," the latter including both the natural and geographical wonders typical of orientalist writing and the human and technological wonders characteristic of romance—a marvelous melange that may remind us of the culturally and historically shifting boundary between the imaginary and the real, as it serves to provide a kind of aesthetic pleasure in counterpoint to *The Book*'s historical, moral, and religious lore and lessons.⁴⁴

The giving of contrastive aesthetic pleasure is certainly the main object of the legend of Hippocrates' daughter—who, like so many female "monsters" and unlike the "gret surgen" (as the Bodley Version's Rawlinson copy calls him), is never named.⁴⁵ In contrast to some of *The Book*'s other marvels, especially religious ones such as that of St. John's tomb, the story of this "chose estrange" never asks to be credited, and so functions almost purely as fiction, an anecdotal diversion meant to entertain *The Book*'s audience, particularly the

“chiualers,” “seignurs,” and “autres nobles homes” singled out at the end of the exordium. Yet the tale is not a mere diversion, since, even if it lacks an obvious moral like the one accompanying the legend of the necrophiliac union, it does implicitly ask the audience to judge its characters. In fact, the legend can be read as an indirect critique of the knightly estate partly resembling the more open attack in the exordium, which reproaches those involved in divisive quarrels at home when there is a divine inheritance to be won overseas.

In its manner of telling, the legend of Hippocrates’ daughter resembles the legends previously related at Constantinople. Like the “Greek” account, for example, of Seth’s quest to Paradise for the oil of mercy, the erotic “Langhoan” legend has a real setting, ostensibly historical characters, and a beginning, middle, and end, while like the exemplum of Justinian, it implies a kind of moral: an unstated challenge to any knight bold enough to win possession of a damsel and a foreign land. By the standards of its kind, the story is told with energy and economy, and it contains in addition enough circumstantial detail to give it an air of verisimilitude in the face of its patent unreality.

Following the introductory disclaimer quoted above, Sir John explains that the dragon lies in a cave in an old castle, showing itself two or three times in the year and harming no one so long as no one harms it. Only then does he say that the nameless daughter was changed from a “fair damsel” by a goddess called Diana and that—“men say”—she will be retransformed when she meets the knight bold enough to kiss her on the mouth, although she will live only a short time afterwards. Not long ago, the story continues, a “brave and hardy” (“pruz . . . et hardiz”) fellow came along who said he would kiss the dragon, and he was “vn chiualer del Hospital de Rodes”—a member of the military order of the Hospitallers, who were established on Rhodes by 1310, and on Cos soon after, and whose members were drawn primarily from France. Unfortunately for the challenger, though, his horse spooked at the sight of the dragon and carried him to an unheroic death: “when the horse saw it so hideous it bolted and carried the knight despite himself to a rock, and from that rock jumped into the sea, and thus was the knight lost” (“quant le chiual le veoit si hideux, il fuy sa voie et porta le chiualer maugree luy sur vn roche, et de celle roche il sailly en la meer, et ensi fuist perduz le chiualer”).⁴⁶

The brave knight having failed through no apparent fault of his own, the legend changes direction, and gets more complex as a story. In this second part, a young man arrives by ship knowing nothing of the dragon and wanders the island until he reaches the castle; going straight in, he enters a room in which he discovers a “damoiselle” making herself up before a mirror and surrounded by much treasure. Considering the situation, the fellow decides that

the damsel must be a "femme legiere" (Insular) or a "folle femme" (Continental), who dwelt there "to receive her suitors [companions]" ("pur reteinere ses assentanz [compaignons]"). Perhaps shy, he waits until the damsel sees his shadow in her mirror and turns to ask him what he wants: "And he responded that he wanted to be her lover. And she asked whether he was a knight; and he said he was not" ("Et il respondy qil voloit estre ses amis. Et elle demandoit sil estoit chiualer; et il dit qe nanil [non]").⁴⁷

In the Bodley version, this polite request for sex is rhetorically enhanced by being given dramatic form, the maiden appearing bold, the visitor bold but polite: "The damesele . . . saw hym and seyde, 'Thow man, what dost thou here?' 'Sertis', he syde, 'ladye, to ben thyn leman yif it be thyn wille'." As it happens, this dramatic shift to direct speech is not the redactor's invention, but an intelligent adaptation, since in the Insular as in the Continental Version the indirect discourse of the narrated exchange gives way to direct speech when the story's focus splits to include the lady's situation along with the young man's desires (the three longer English versions do not follow this shift):

"Donques," dit elle, "ne purrez vous estre mes amis. Mes alez vers voz compaignons et faitez vous faire chiualer; et demain ieo yssey hors de cienz et vous irray a deuant. Et moy venez baiser en la bouche et naiez point de pour, qar ieo ne vous ferray point de mal. Et combien qe vous semble qe soie hideux a voire, ceo est par enchantement, qar ieo suy tielle come vous ore voerez. Et si vous me baisez, vous auerez tot ceo tresour, et serrez mon baroun [maris] et sire de cestez isles."⁴⁸

"Then," she said, "you can't be my lover. But go to your companions and have them make you a knight; and tomorrow I'll come out of my seat and come before you. And come and kiss me on the mouth and have no fear at all, for I'll do you no harm whatsoever. And although I seem to you hideous to look at, it's because of a spell, for I am such as you see now. And if you kiss me, you will have all this treasure, and be my master [husband] and lord of these islands."

Curiously, the damsel neglects to say that the kiss will also break the spell over her, although both the Velser and von Diemeringen Versions remedy the omission. As we might expect, given that we already know that the dragon/damsel was "still" there at the time of Sir John's journey, the young man does what he is told, but then flees in fear from the dragon, which in a moment of genuine pathos chases after him: "And when she saw that he would not return to her, she began to cry and bray like a woman mourning, and turned back; and soon after this knight died. And ever since no knight can see her but he dies soon after" ("Et elle suy apres, et quant elle vist qil

ne retorneroit vers luy, si commencea a crier et braier come dolente, et retorna ariere; et tantoust cis chiualer morust. Et vnqes puis nul chiualers ne la poent veoir qils ne fuissent tantoust mortz”). Such perhaps are the desserts reserved for those who rise, unworthy, above their earthly station: “But when the knight comes who is bold enough that he dare go to kiss her, he will not die, but will restore the damsel to her true form and be lord of the land” (“Mes, quant y vendra chiualer si herdyz qe lose aler baisier, il ne morra mie, mes conuertera la damoiselle en sa droite fourme et serra sire de pais”).⁴⁹

Following this (mocking?) challenge to chivalric readers, *The Book* resumes its itinerary, whose next stop is Rhodes, “which the Hospitallers hold and govern” (“qe ly Hospitlers tignent et gouvernent”).⁵⁰ Of no significance in itself, this passing reference to the Hospitallers and their successful occupation of foreign territory recalls the first part of the Langhoan legend and thus serves as a reminder that the marvelous tale is more than a diverting digression, especially for those in the audience whose task it is to fight rather than to pray or to labor. The Knight Hospitaller’s fate, after all, shows how individual desire and bravery alone are insufficient to win possession of promised territory: good planning and proper matériel are also needed.⁵¹ By the same token, the young man’s fate reveals what can happen when commoners are too readily allowed into the knightly ranks. Perhaps the mirror into which the damsel gazes is a symbol less of vanity than of self-knowledge: powerless to help herself, the passive figure understands her situation and motives far better than the two lecherous suitors do their own.

In any case, one can hardly deny that the erotic legend is told in a manner that evokes pity for the transformed, trapped, and desperately human damsel rather than awe or terror at the power of pagan magic, as one might expect in a pilgrim’s guide. In Deluz’s view, this emphasis on pity is “the mark of the courtly humanism that characterizes” the *Mandeville*-author’s work, and no doubt it is, although as the present chapter has revealed this mark appears without contradiction alongside the marks of a clerical divinism (so to say) whose pity shades easily into piety, both of which attitudes sometimes reveal a certain underlying misogyny as well. In the medieval world, as Friedman notes, “the line between sacred and profane wonders [or choses estranges] was not always distinct.”⁵²

Eros Awry Again: The Tall Tale Retold

No less than its lore, doctrine, and propaganda, *The Book*’s legend of Hippocrates’ daughter invited the silent intervention of translators and redactors,

who seem not to have found it out of place in a pilgrim's guide. Only the Vulgate Latin redactor, in fact, regarded the story as irrelevant, omitting even to paraphrase it as he did with the legend of Satalia's destruction. In his hands, the two-page tale of recent misadventures on Langho shrinks to a passing mention of the island's connection with Hippocrates: "the physician Hippocrates is said to have been born there" ("unde Hypocrates Medicus dicitur natus"). Unwilling to deal in such draconian fashion with the unfortunate dragon-lady, *The Book's* other intermediaries nevertheless retain its introductory double disclaimer. Indeed, this is the one place where none of them intervenes in the story—except the maker of the Bodley Version's Rawlinson copy, who either missed the point or had met the story's elements elsewhere, since he introduces the legend with the assertion that "confermed [is] it in manye londes and seide."⁵³

Yet this is not to say that the others reproduce the introductory words exactly as they found them. Otto von Diemeringen, for instance, has Sir John preface the double disclaimer with an advertisement for local wonders that makes only knowledge of the marvel still extant, not the transformed damsel herself: "And since many marvels have occurred in that country, I want to tell a great marvel that is still recalled nowadays" ("Und want vil wonders ist geschehen in dem lande, so wil ich eyn gross wonder sagen, das man meynet noch hutisdags"). The Cotton, Defective, and Egerton translators, in contrast, more subtly qualify the introductory words, rendering "dit homme" as "*somme* men seyn." In addition, the latter two neglect to translate the troubling "vncore" ("still")—without however finding a solution like von Diemeringen's—and seem to have thought a hundred fathoms a bit big even for a dragon, reducing it to "a hundreth fote lang," a reduction likewise found in Velser's Version, which makes the beast "some forty fathoms" ("wol viertzig claufter") in length. Both copies of the Bodley Version, on the other hand, omit all reference to the creature's size, drawing attention instead to its appearance by making it "a foule horrible dragoun," or just "an oryble" one, as does the Metrical Version, which takes no responsibility for the information that its redactor has just invented: "a dragoun, *as seith the boke*, / The most horrible that euer was sene."⁵⁴

These two English redactions, which more than any others are interested in *The Book* as a storybook, also make free with the introductory material by working in details that motivate the legend. Why, after all, should the lady have been transformed in the first place? Significantly, both redactors look to the "classical" explanations—the gendered generic expectations—of fairy tale and romance, and bring to light the legend's implicit misogyny. Thus, the Metrical Version says that Hippocrates' daughter was done in by her step-

mother, whose own inheritance was at stake—"He had a doughter that was ful faire, / That of the londe shuld ben his aire [heir], / But hir stepmoodire hir forshope"—while the Bodley redaction reveals that the pagan gods are as jealous as ever of human blessings: "whan she was fayr, yong, and louely . . . a goddesse that hight Dyane, for gret enuye that she hadde to here grete beute, shop here into the lyknesse of an oryble dragoun." Given the beauty he attributes to the lady, it is scarcely surprising that this redactor makes his version of the Hospitaller not "brave and hardy," but "a hardy knyght and an amorous"—in contrast, von Diemeringen's challenger is simply "pious": "eyn fromer ritter."⁵⁵

Less explicable is a change that the several English prose versions make to the central action of the story's first part. Whether through bad reading or something else—a desire to add a stirring chase scene, to make the knight's unchivalric demise less pointless, to make the two parts of the narrative more symmetrical, or even to express anti-French sentiment during the Hundred Years War—these versions all rework the story so as to blame the knight himself for his death, only moments after they have described him as brave (in von Diemeringen's Version, both horse and rider are depicted as frightened, but the latter has not been introduced as brave). Here is the Egerton Version's pithy narrative: "And he leped on his coursere and went to þe castell and entered in to þe caue whare þe dragoun lay. And scho began to lift vp hir heued agayne him; and þe knyght sawe it so hidous, and fast he fledd away. And þe dragoun folowed and tuke þe knyght and bare him maugree his [heued] til a cragg of þe see, and ouer þat cragg scho kest him in to þe see; and so was þat knyght lost"—or "so was lost bothe hors + man," as the more thorough Cotton ending has it.⁵⁶

In contrast to their consensus on the central action of the first part, the English prose renderings differ on the description of the lady in the second part, with the Bodley Version going its own way. In this instance, the Bodley redaction slightly reworks the received description of what the other English versions call the "common womman," as the young man mistakenly supposes the lady to be, thus making its added detail of the damsel's beauty fully functional: "she was so fair and had so mochel tresour, he wende that she had been a woman that livede be hir body, and so had geten al that tresour."⁵⁷

The Velser and von Diemeringen Versions also rework the description of the damsel at her toilet so as to make the young man's lecherous train of thought clearer, the former putting the matter more crudely. "And around her lay great riches," states Vesler's rendering: "Then he thought that this was one of the common women and [she] lived there all the time and probably serviced everyone" ("und umb sie lag grosser schatz. Do wond er es war der

germainen frowen aine, und wonette die all wegen da und hett mit yeder-man zeschaffent”). In contrast, the riches disappear from von Diemeringen’s redaction, the only version not to suggest that the maiden was reaping rewards from her miserable situation: “Then he saw in the old ruined walls a really very beautiful maiden combing her hair and gazing in a mirror. Then he thought, this is a poor good daughter who was in the habit of waiting on male companions and leading them to sin” (“Do sach er in dem alden zübrochen müren cyn alzu gar schoene jonfrauwe sich strelen und in eyme spiegel besehen. Do meynte er, iß were eine gude arme dochte[r], die guder gesellen plege zu warten und zu willen zu synde”).⁵⁸

Apart perhaps from the decision by the English prose translators to shift the blame from the horse to the knight, none of the changes introduced by *The Book*’s many translators and redactors affects the basic meaning of the marvelous legend. Their significance is rather that they reveal how actively engaged such intermediaries were in their work; indeed, all of them—especially the Bodley redactor—read the tale with a critical eye, changing whatever details they thought needed rewriting. With the exception then of the Vulgate Latin redactor, who resembles Margery Kempe in his view that some stories are not to be told to or by Jerusalem pilgrims, all of the intermediaries discussed here embraced the *Mandeville*-author’s attempt to diversify still further with a tall tale or two the “choses estranges” that adorn the instructive itinerary.

Marvels, Miracles, and Dreams of Re-Expansion in Egypt and the Holy Land

AFTER THE DIGRESSIVE INITIAL VISIT TO Constantinople, as we saw in the previous chapter, *The Book* has hardly recommenced teaching the way to the Holy Land before it digresses yet again, this time into several religious and erotic legends about the eastern Mediterranean. Following this second expansive digression, which confirms and develops *The Book's* roundabout *forma tractandi*, the instructive itinerary reaches the Palestine coast. Instead of going straight into “la Seinte Terre de Promissioun,”¹ however, it leads would-be pilgrims into Egypt for a pleasantly casual survey of the country’s religious and secular “choses estranges,” since even the sober William of Boldensele follows the practice of writers on the East and includes some such matter in his “little book on . . . the Holy Land.” Only then, after this diverting delay, which lasts twice as long as William’s divagation, does the text finally make good on Sir John’s opening promise to describe the Holy Land, heading there by way of the most celebrated pilgrimage site outside Palestine, the Greek monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai, and again offering an account about twice as long as the *Liber's*.

In retracing William’s grand Egyptian tour, the *Mandeville*-author and his translators necessarily follow him on a route that sets their multi-text apart from most pilgrim’s guides, which ignore preliminary and secondary itineraries. Unlike his source, though, the *Mandeville*-author implicitly acknowledges this hierarchy when, as we saw, he takes would-be pilgrims proleptically to Jerusalem through the account of the Passion relics in Constantinople. If William anywhere recognizes the Holy Land’s presumed priority, it is just before he enters Egypt; noting that he was scarcely twenty miles away from Jerusalem along the Palestine coast, he explains his departure from the straight and narrow by calling on both piety and politics: “[I] wanted to see Egypt

and Arabia first, so that, having obtained the sultan's letters [of safe conduct], I would be able to visit the holiest places in the land of promise more comfortably and more safely on the return journey" ("vol[ui] prius videre Aegyptum et Arabiam, ut, obtentis soldani literis, possem in reversione commodius et securius terrae promissionis loca sanctissima visitare")—a statement that the *Mandeville*-author adapts to suit his generic pilgrim.²

The general manner and matter of *The Book*'s reworked Egyptian survey resemble those of the text so far, the main differences being that it now pays more attention to political and natural history and that it is sketching a portrait of an entire country, a chorography as it might once have been called. This chorography is not only the first, but also one of the most thorough such passages in *The Book*, as well as the first extended account of the non-Christian world, and it thus sets the tone for subsequent accounts. Like the visit to Constantinople, the tour of Egypt offers a fascinating picture of a foreign place that, though organized first around the political center and then around the country itself, never comes together as a coherent whole. It remains a loose bundle of marvels, miracles, and religious memorabilia, and sometimes of customs and manners, that creates a sustained sense of natural, historical, and cultural Otherness, and this multiple Otherness—much of it associated with the Saracens, Christendom's most hated rival apart from the Jews—is rarely painted in a negative light. As before, the division of things into "ours" and "theirs" is seen as a cause for wonder, not concern, and "their" space is represented as containing important traces of "our" history, as if to suggest that the distant territory is not alien, just alienated. In addition, there are several thematically and rhetorically important surprises in this Egyptian farrago, the most striking being those that present Sir John as more than an expository voice in "his own memoirs."

When *The Book* carries its audience into the Land of Promise after this roundabout approach, it takes its own distinctive place in a tradition of religiously inspired historico-geographical writing that reaches back to Jerome and Egeria in the fourth century. This long tradition served many purposes, including those of theology and biblical scholarship, but one common aim—an aim partly pursued by the *Mandeville*-author—was to provide the untraveled faithful with a vicarious pilgrimage, allowing them to call to mind those spatially and temporally distant places, persons, and events known to them from sacred history. As one writer put it in his twelfth-century Latin description of the holy places, he wrote to "satisfy the desires of those who are unable to proceed thither in their actual person"³—desires which, the contents of his and other treatises reveal, were thought to be entirely spiritual. Hence their almost exclusive focus on the biblical associations of any given site. In con-

trast, the *Mandeville*-author must have believed the desires of vicarious pilgrims to be as various as the pilgrims themselves, since his textual tour of the Holy Land—though it pays special attention to matters of interest to religious travelers, without touching on practical concerns such as interpreters, indulgences, or the price of religious souvenirs—contains enough additional lore and legends to make it resemble his diverting account of the East generally.

Whatever the particular bits of lore or legend that one recalls from *The Book's* near-eastern (as also from its far-eastern) tour, one cannot fail to be struck by the *Mandeville*-author's thorough-going indifference, already manifest in the account of Constantinople, to the orderly unfolding of the discourse. This sort of "laissez-aller" in composition characterizes most medieval travel books, of course (though not William's *Liber*), and it is, as Jean-Paul Roux notes, "indisputably one of the attractions of these accounts. But," he hastens to add, "it also results in a serious absence of a hierarchy of values. Small facts interest the travelers just as much as those of the greatest importance." Roux's point is well taken, since it reminds us that even the most educated medieval people had no proto-Linnean *systema naturae et culturae* to reduce the world to order when they ventured abroad—whether in reality or in texts. And when they recorded their adventures, they did so according to a "different taxonomy of reality" from that of later travelers, rarely centering the text on the exemplary "I"—the methodical surveyor's eye.⁴

Yet having acknowledged Roux's point, one has to note that *The Book's* discursive "laissez-aller" can be understood quite differently. Donald Howard, for instance, persuasively makes the best of the *Mandeville*-author's compositional habits by viewing the "disjunctive and unstructured" tour of the Holy Land as formally mimetic: "We see, as one would on pilgrimage . . . learn odd bits of information and glimpse curiosities as we pass."⁵ Still another view—the one that I would take based on our knowledge that the *Mandeville*-author augmented and overwrote his sources and that the disorderly result was very widely read during its first two hundred years in the world—is that *The Book's* discursive order reveals how highly (though not deeply) curious the "closed" world of Latin Christendom was about the larger world's "choses estranges," and that the author well knew how eagerly his projected audience would receive a quasi-encyclopedic patchwork of foreign and familiar lore—especially when it constantly reaffirms the culture's highest values and aspirations. Whatever *The Book's* discursive anarchy might suggest, then, its claims about the eastern world reveal that the *Mandeville*-author, his intermediaries, and his and their readers generally shared a hierarchy of values.

In the present chapter, I look at three aspects in particular of the

Mandeville-author's unshapely yet compelling assemblage of overseas bric-a-brac: the heightening of both the marvelous and the pious elements in William's Egyptian survey along with the suppression of the *Liber*'s hostile references to the Saracens; the continuing emphasis, in the text's passage through the holy places, on faith-inspiring wonders, now supplemented by vague prophecies of the Holy Land's recovery; and Sir John's memorably irregular appearances in both territories, which typically concern customs and manners, especially the religious beliefs and practices of the Latin Christians as well as the Saracens. In the survey of Egypt, for example, the *Mandeville*-author reorganizes his source so that Cairo's biblical memories receive attention before the Sultan does, even though the latter then gets a more extensive and positive portrait than he does in the *Liber*. This redrawn sketch notwithstanding, *The Book's* tour of the holy places—which undoes William's efforts to demystify popular traditions surrounding religious marvels—reinforces earlier allusions to Christianity's universal primacy, as do several of Sir John's interventions, the tour and the interventions alike recalling the exordium's central theme: the reconquest of the Holy Land. The culmination of this concern comes in the concluding excursus on Islam, which not only explains how easily the Saracens can be converted, but also recounts Sir John's private colloquy with the Sultan about the dreadful state of Christian religious practice and the inevitable return of the Holy Land consequent upon reform.

The English Knight's memorable encounter with the Sultan and the text's prophecies about the recovery of Palestine were, as we might expect, passages that attracted special attention from some of *The Book's* intermediaries. The Bodley and Egerton Versions, for example, enhance the Sultan's homiletic critique of Christian behavior as though their redactors were clerics themselves, and the Vulgate Latin also strengthens its rhetorical force, emphasizing Sir John's embarrassed response. At the same time, though, the Latin redaction omits some of the prophecies in the Holy Land, as do the Bodley, Metrical, and von Diemeringen Versions, and it demystifies several of the religious marvels there, such as the traces of Mary's breast milk in Bethlehem that the von Diemeringen Version has Sir John kiss or the miraculous lamp in Jerusalem that the Velser Version is highly enthusiastic about. In fact, in contrast to the typically contrary Vulgate Latin, most renderings slightly heighten the air of marvelous piety in *The Book's* tour of the biblical East, as, for instance, the Egerton Version does in the religious legend of the encounter between a monster and a hermit in the Egyptian desert.

All About Egypt, or the Marvelous Art of Religious Chorography

Perhaps because William's Egyptian tour is not organized entirely around his own itinerary, or perhaps because he had no model for his chorography, *The Book's* template here looks somewhat less orderly than usual, and its relative disorder only increases in the overwriting. Beginning as usual with the German pilgrim's progress and arrival, which just as typically appear in the English Knight's "memoir" as a generic itinerary, and then attending mostly to his central concerns (faith, history, power, and wealth), the *Liber's* account closes uncharacteristically with a catalogue of local curiosities, most of which William claims to have seen and all of which appear in *The Book* alongside still others.

Arriving in Egypt after spending seven days in the Syrian desert, William fittingly begins by mentioning the countless beautiful dwellings and the abundance of temporal goods, while noting that the Saracens do not cultivate grapes or raise pigs, "this being quite strictly prevented by their law, which is written in the book they call Alcoran" ("hoc eis lege ipsorum, quae in libro, quem Alcoranum dicunt, scribitur, strictius inhibente"). Declining to depart any further from his textually untraditional route to visit the famous cities of Damietta or Alexandria, he proceeds to the twin cities of Cairo and Babylon, "the metropolis of Egypt, where the sultan has his seat in a most beautiful fortress" ("ad . . . metropolim Aegypti, ubi est sedes soldani in uno castro pulcherrimo"). After noticing the fortress and the Sultan's many servants and soldiers, William turns to the cities as such, viewing them much as he did Constantinople and noting that "this Babylon . . . is a new Babylon named after the old and a sort of imitator in its works" ("haec Babylonia . . . est haec nova Babylonia antiquae in nomine et quodammodo in operibus imitatrix").⁶

With this remark, the toponymic account unexpectedly swerves into a diatribe against the Egyptian Sultan, whom William attacks not only for his opposition to "us Christians, the true Israelites" ("nobis Christianis, veris Israelitis")—even though, as we learn a few pages later, he honored the Dominican by granting him unheard-of privileges, protection, and freedom of movement in the Holy Land—but also for his work as "principal champion and disseminator of Machomet's impious perfidy" ("principalis propugnator et dilatator impiae perfidiae Machometi"); and this polemic leads into a further digression, wherein one sees the prophet denounced as "that liar who imposed his diabolical law" on the "bestial and uneducated" desert-dwellers of Arabia ("ille mendax . . . qui . . . in deserto Arabiae hominibus bestialibus et indoctis legemque diabolicum . . . imposuit"), and one learns that Muslim

pilgrims flock to the prophet's tomb at Mecca "from all the regions of the world" ("ex omnibus mundi partibus")—a comment that must have caused no little pain among William's readers in the papal curia at Avignon.⁷

Having served notice of his views on Islam, William briefly resumes the subject of the old Babylon, locating it in Chaldea—now ruled by the "chan, that is the emperor of the Tartars of Persia" ("chan, id est imperator Tartarorum de Persia")—and recalling other theories concerning both its location and that of the tower of Babel. From Babel, he returns to the new Babylon and discusses the Nile and the city's fine churches, giving them slightly less space, but singling out "the church of the blessed Virgin . . . where she, with Jesus Christ and Joseph, when they fled into Egypt . . . is said to have dwelt for some time" ("ecclesia beatae Virginis . . . ubi ipsa cum Christo Jesu et Joseph, quando in Aegyptum . . . fugerat, aliquamdiu dicitur habitasse")—when medieval travelers have an eye for beauty, it is rarely for landscapes, commonly for churches, royal courts, or cities.⁸

William is now about halfway through his account of Egypt, but it is only here that he provides an overview of the country itself, using it as a prologue to his closing grabbag of curiosities: the three live elephants and the giraffe that he saw in Cairo, as well as other animals; the world's best emeralds; the "oblong fruit called the fruit of paradise" ("poma oblonga, quae paradisi nuncupantur," the plantain), which when cut through the center reveals the image of the crucifix, but which rots so quickly that William was unable to bring any back; artificial incubators for poultry; the market in non-Muslim slaves; the fertile land of Goshen; the unique balm garden near Cairo; and the pyramids, which "the simple-minded say . . . were Pharaoh's granary" ("dicunt simplices . . . fuisse granaria Pharaonis")—an attack on received medieval opinion supported by an explanation that the monuments' very design precludes such a function.⁹

In overwriting, augmenting, and sometimes miscorrecting this pious and wonderful chorographic tour of Egypt, the *Mandeville*-author makes a number of significant changes, giving it a quite different feel. The resulting text is at once subtler, richer, more memorable, and less coherent, despite being organized by the six-times-repeated phrase "Babiloigne, ou le soudan demoere" ("Babylon, where the Sultan dwells") and then by some ten repetitions of "en Egipte"—the last of which introduces the concluding punctuation mark of the local alphabet.¹⁰ In the *Mandeville*-author's refabricating hands, most of William's historical allusions, for example, grow in size, and much new historical material is interpolated, along with many new marvels and two remarkable authenticating appearances by Sir John (at the Sultan's court and in the balm garden); but what is particularly striking is the new di-

rection given to the account's religious tenor, which ceases altogether to be intolerant and yet becomes more pious.

For a start, *The Book's* arrival in Babylon begins not with the description of the Sultan's dwelling, but with a reference to the "church of our Lady" ("esglise de nostre Dame") mentioned by William in the middle of his account, and this is followed by an interpolated summary of the biblical story (Dan. 3: 8–30) in which Nebuchadnezzar places Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace and miraculously sees "the Son of God, as he said, walking with his children through the fire" ("le Filz Dieu, si come il disoit, aler ouesque ses enfantz parmy le feu")—a story that shows the *Mandeville*-author erasing William's careful distinction by confusing the old Babylon with the new.¹¹

Only after this oblique suggestion that Egypt has long been effectively Christian territory, does the *Mandeville*-author follow William into the Sultan's citadel. Here the *Liber's* anti-Islamic diatribe disappears (somewhat unexpectedly, given the exordium's crusading propaganda), replaced by a lengthy, dispassionate, ethnohistorical account of the Mamluk sultanate largely derived from the work of three well-informed writers (William of Tripoli, Jacques de Vitry, and Hayton of Armenia), all of whom spent time "outramer" and none of whom was any more sympathetic to the Muslim world than the Dominican. *The Book* does not gloss over the sultanate's bloody intrigues, and dates its changes with reference to famous conflicts with English and French kings, but the current Sultan is depicted almost positively, characterized as he is by a lordly largesse and a military, marital, and sexual power unthinkable in Latin Christendom.¹²

From this recent ethnohistory, the author turns to biblical and classical antiquity, radically reworking William's discussion of the two Babylons by presenting as true what his source treats sceptically: the conjecture that the city of "Baldacum" on the Euphrates is the ancient Babylon, and that the Tower of Babel may have been located nearby. Mining respectable authorities for his information (Brunetto Latini and Orosius, respectively), the *Mandeville*-author relates the legends of the famous Tower and of Cyrus's vengeful parting of the Euphrates into 360 streams.¹³ At first glance, the interpolated stories seem unrelated, but another look reveals that they both concern rises and falls, thus providing a kind of counterpoint to the preceding depiction of the impressive Mamluk sultanate, implying that even the grandest powers are destined to fall. Like much of *The Book's* material, these two ostensibly historical narratives are mythical in shape, which means that, whether or not one accepts them as literally true, as medieval audiences mainly did, they are at once powerful and pleasing. In fact, the two legends are attractive enough that one hardly notices how *The Book* has digressed from its

account of recent Egyptian and Christian history and Egyptian customs into the more remote past of a region located on the far side of the Holy Land, a waywardness organized, as usual, by a principle of association (here of political geography and political history).

William's distinction between the two Babylons—in particular his passing reference to the Persian Khan—also allows the *Mandeville*-author an important interpolation about contemporary history. The significance of this passage, apart from its encouraging one to read on for bigger and better things, is that it connects in one place the three outstandingly powerful rulers whose realms largely define the outlines of *The Book's* eastern world, confirming that its spatial order is as much political as geographical. Noting that the Persian emperor and not the Sultan rules the land where the old Babylon lies, the text casts a glance still farther east to the domain of the Great Khan:

Ceo est le grant emperour et pluis souerainz de tous les parties de la [et du monde], et est sires del isle de Cathay, des mointes autres isles et de grande partie de Ynde [et de toute la terre Prestre Iehan]. *Et marchist sa terre a la terre Pretre Iohan*; et tient tant de terre qil ne sciet les confines, et est pluis grande et pluis puissant sanz comparson qe ly soudan ne soit. Et de sa puissance et de son estat ieo parleray pluis pleinement, quant ieo parleray de la terre et de pais de Ynde.¹⁴

He is the great emperor and most sovereign of all the parts over there [and the world], and is lord of the isle of Cathay, of many other isles and of the great part of Ynde [and of all of Prester John's Land]. *And his land borders on Prester John's Land*, and he holds so much land that he does not know its limits, and he is greater and more powerful without comparison than the sultan. And of his power and estate I shall speak more fully, when I speak of the land and country of Ynde.

For the moment, though, Sir John is speaking of the distant, ancient Babylon, which the *Mandeville*-author now has him use for a digression on "the realm of Arabia" ("le roialme de Arabe"), before he returns to his temple and conflates its descriptions of the new Babylon's location and the Nile as a way into the larger Egyptian chorography and the catalogue of curiosities, shifting the focus from political to physical geography and from ethno-history to natural history. *The Book's* report here depends more on the *Liber* than does its account of Babylon, but it is as freely overwritten. The overview of Egypt, for example, expands so that, like Arabia, it can be situated relative to other territories, while the catalogue gets elaborated and rearranged, and receives some new items: the legend of a meeting between "a holy wise hermit" ("vn seint prodhomme heremite") and a half-human, half-goatlike monster whose horned head is kept at Alexandria as a marvel; the phoenix at

Heliopolis (glossed as a figure of the resurrected Christ); still other significant fruit, including “Adam’s apples, which also have a bite in the side” (“pommes de Adam, qui ont aussi vn mors ou coste”); the wells near the balm garden that the child Jesus created with his feet while playing with other children; and the Egyptian alphabet.¹⁵

What is notable about these additional diversities (except the alphabet) is that they give the marvelous catalogue a distinct religious coloring, and the same is true of the changes made to the curiosities borrowed from William. The principal effect of this tonal modification is to blur the line that exists in the *Liber* between spiritual and profane marvels: indeed, such a distinction hardly obtains in *The Book*’s composite world. The balm garden near Cairo, for instance, is now said by the Saracens themselves to require cultivation by Christians (“for they have often proved it”; “qar ils lont souent esproue”),¹⁶ while the pyramids are wrongly returned to their received medieval function as a granary surviving from biblical times, but with one significant difference: they are now the work of God’s chosen (Joseph), not that of his people’s enemy (Pharaoh). Advancing the persuasive evidence of “common report” (“comune renomée”), local chronicles, and common sense (the architecture of the pyramids—their size, height, and doors—is not that of tombs), the *Mandeville*-author makes himself one of William’s “simplices” by noting that “some say that they are sepulchers of great lords from long ago; but this is not true” (“dient ascuns qe cez sunt sepultures des grantz seignurs de iadys; mes ceo nest mie voirs”). Rather, “they are *Joseph*’s granaries, which he had made to conserve grain for times of dearth” (“Ces sunt les grainers *Ioseph*, qil fist faire pur les bledz garder pur les chierz ans”)—a claim that alludes to and elaborates the account in Genesis 41: 46–57, thus bringing the ancient monuments firmly into the created world’s one story.¹⁷

Some Egyptian Variations

Two of *The Book*’s textual isotopes (the Bodley and Vulgate Latin Versions) decline to enter into debate over the pyramids’ function, omitting to mention the structures at all, while another (the von Diemeringen Version) presents the contrary views as conjectural, referring, for instance, to “old large buildings, which *one says* were Joseph’s granaries” (“alde grosse gebuetze, die *man meynet*, das sy Joseps spýker weren”).¹⁸ As with the pyramids, so with the rest of the disjunctive Egyptian tour: most isotopes render it as it appears in the Continental and Insular Versions, altering or adding details rather than changing the shape and course of the whole. Excluding the Defective Version,

which here is missing about a quire's worth of material (the so-called Egypt gap), the main exceptions are the usual ones: the Vulgate Latin, which compresses and paraphrases; the Metrical Version, which not only compresses, but also displaces the Egyptian visit so that the itinerary moves from the more familiar (the Holy Land) to the less; and the Bodley Version's Rawlinson copy, which displaces into its compressed account of the Mamluk sultanate a relevant later passage, Sir John's colloquy with the Sultan.

Two of the most striking and strikingly different Egyptian variations are found in the Velser and Egerton Versions, the two changes testifying eloquently to the varied responses that *The Book* could evoke from its earliest readers. The second redaction of the Velser Version, for example, contains an interpolation of a sort unique to it: the translator's personal authenticating commentary (the more typical strategy is to have Sir John himself claim to have seen something). The passage in question occurs much later in Velser's first redaction, but he may have moved it to Egypt from far-eastern Thana so as to raise the problem of believable wonders sooner rather than later, in this case after the description (in the marvelous catalogue) of brood ovens for hatching eggs:

Es sol ewch nicht ain wunder dunchken, wann ich michel velser . . . hab gesehen ainen hunt zû pauia . . . der was als grozz als ain ziliger wind, der was geporn von ainem vogel. . . der haizzet frakolos. . . der legt drew aer; zwai werdent vogel, das dritt ain hunt; da von sag ich ewch, das vil ding enhalbe meres sind, der wir hart gelawben vnd doch war sind.¹⁹

It ought not to seem a wonder to you, since I, Michel Velser . . . have seen a dog in Pavia . . . which was as large as an ordinary greyhound and was born to a bird. . . . It is called frakalos [i.e., francolin]. . . . It lays three eggs; two become birds, the third, a dog. Wherefore I tell you that there are many things beyond the sea which we have a hard time believing and yet are true.

It is not Italy but Nubia that figures in the Egerton Version's most notable addition, which appears in the brief geographical overview that introduces the catalogue of curiosities, just after the *Mandeville*-author's text notes that "the Nubians are Christians, but they are black like Moors [blackberries] on account of the sun's great heat" ("sunt les Nubiens Cristiens, mes ils sunt noirs come More [meure] pur la grande chaleure de solail"). Possibly inspired by a remark in Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*—"we consider black Ethiopes to be ugly, but among themselves the blacker one is the more beautiful one is judged to be" ("nos autem nigros Æthiopes turpes reputamus, inter ipsos autem qui nigrior est, pulchrior ab ipsis judicatur")—the Egerton redac-

tor interpolates into his French source a more modern-sounding comment on the relative nature of beauty and colour symbolism, entirely changing the force of Jacques's statement and echoing the sort of thing that the *Mandeville*-author's text will later say about some foreign peoples and practices (the interpolated comment is ultimately medieval, of course, since it views Otherness as a simple, symmetrical inversion of the Self): "þai are cristned. Bot þai er blakk of colour; and þat þai hald a grete bewtee, and ay þe blakker þai er þe fairer þam think þam. And þai say þat, and þai schuld paynt ane aungell and a fende, þai wald paynt þe aungell black and þe fende qwhite. And, if þaim think þam noȝt black ynough when þai er borne, þai vse certayne medecynes for to make þam black withall."²⁰

A few sentences after this, in the first entry in the marvelous catalogue, the Egerton Version contains a subtler but no less interesting and intelligent reworking of the French text: specifically, of the legend of the desert meeting between the hermit and the monster. The reworked story is more effective rhetorically and its allegorical significance is more apparent, transformed as the legend now is from a marvel with religious overtones into a fullblown (if still minor) miracle. The central character, for instance, becomes a "beste forschapen" ("metamorphosed beast") rather than a "monster," while his human and goatlike parts are reversed, making him a miraculous talking animal rather than a human being with a symbolically bestial lower body. In addition, the beast's request for prayers on his own behalf is turned into direct speech and made more clearly an appeal for salvation, since he is represented as a suffering creature in his own right, like Hippocrates' daughter, and not just as a disposable character required by the narrative:²¹

Pria al heremite qil vousist celluy Dieu prier pur luy, qi *pur sauuer le humaine lignage* descendy de ciels et nasqui de la pucelle et passion et mort soeffrist, si qe nous le sauons et par qi nous viuons et sumes. Et vncore est la teste ouesques les cornz de ceo *monstre* a Alexandre pur le *merueille*.

He bid the hermit pray for him to that God who, in order *to save the human race*, came down from heaven and was born of a maiden and suffered passion and death, as we know, and through whom we live and have our being. And the horned head of this *monster* is still at Alexandria as a *marvel*.

"I pray þee, hermite, þat þou will pray to Godd for me, þat he þat come fra hauen *till erthe for þe saluacioun of mannes saule*, and was borne of a mayden, and sufferd *hard* passioun, thurgh wham we all liffe, stirres, and hase beyng, *þat he hafe mercy on me*." ȝit es þe heued of þat *beste* with þe hornes . . . at Alisaunder for a *miracle*.

The Bodley Version, which shares a lost common source with the Egerton, recounts this legend in almost exactly the same words, but the two

surviving manuscripts differ notably. The Rawlinson copy, for example, has a second exchange between the two characters, which repeats the first with variations (like the second part of the legend of Hippocrates' daughter), while also returning the desert creature to his traditional role as tempter of hermits and, in a kind of naturalistic gesture, explaining exactly how the relic came into being. The hermit is "in dispeyr" to find the beast unexpectedly desiring salvation, so he "conioure[s]" it a second time to explain itself, causing it to vanish like the diabolical female temptresses in the Grail romance:

this beeste seide, "I am god of this wildernes, and be an holy man commaunded hider to duelle, and to tempte cristen men walkynge in this desert." Thenne seide the hermyte, "Caste away thyne hornes fro thyne heede with the skalpe." And so he dide and vanysshed away. And ȝit is the heed . . . kepid . . . for a myracle.²²

On the Holy Places: Relics, Religious Wonders, and the Consolation of Prophecy

Prominent enough in *The Book's* Egyptian tour, such religious wonders are only more conspicuous in the holy places, starting at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai: there, for instance, the oil is replenished yearly by birds arriving, "as if on pilgrimage" ("sicome en pelrinage"), with olive branches. Indeed, there is hardly a place between Sinai and Syria that lacks marvels, memorials, or material traces of Christianity's glorious past, as well as reminders of darker events, as in this Continental rubric: "Of the Dead Sea, and the reason why Lot's daughters made their father drunk" ("De la Morte Mer, et la cause pour quoy les filles Loth enyurerent leur pere"). Like many guides, *The Book* presents the Holy Land "as a relic of sorts," sometimes "heaping up a charnel-house of specific details," while using its itinerary to offer an diverting bricolage of popular belief, reminders of Christian accomplishment, and, most notably, prophecies of the Holy Land's reconquest—in contrast to its underlying source, which offers scepticism towards popular belief, reminders of William's own achievements, and orthodox theology.²³

Among the holy places of interest to Latin Christians, Bethlehem may be taken as typical, since it allowed them to commemorate figures and events from the early Church as well as from the Bible. Thus, in the *Liber*, the town recalls not only the nativity, but also the birth of David, the slaughter of the Innocents, and the life and death of Jerome. This is the standard fare of pilgrimage writing, of course, but William heightens its interest by adding several personal memories to his brief survey, such as that of the nativity mass which he had sung "by the priest whom [he] took with [him] on the en-

tire sacred journey . . . [who] was allowed to celebrate [mass] in those sites, because [William] visited this most holy place with the supreme pontiff's license" ("per sacerdotem, quem per totum sanctum iter [s]ecum duxi[t] . . . [qui] potuit in istis locis licite celebrare, quia de licentia summi pontificis haec loca sanctissima visitavi[t]").²⁴

Unlike William, Sir John possesses no papal license (his only privileges, as we shall see, come from the Sultan), and *The Book* says nothing about his experiences in Bethlehem. Instead, it offers additional historical and legendary material drawn from a variety of sources. Inspired perhaps by William's nativity mass, the *Mandeville*-author recounts a quite different celebration: a resurrection mass which, unspecified prophecies assert, will be sung near Bethlehem at Mt. Mambre, the place of the Dry Tree, a plant said to have been green from creation until Jesus's death. The miraculous effects of this mass recall the exordium's concern with the Holy Land's reconquest, and almost seem meant to inspire the noble audience addressed in the opening passage: "And certain prophecies say that a lord prince of the west will win the land of promise with help from the Christians and have a mass sung under the dry tree, and then the tree will turn green again and bear leaves and fruit, through which miracle many Saracens and many Jews will [believe and] convert to the Christian law" ("Et dient ascuns prophecies qe vn seignur prince doccident gainera la terre de promissioun ouesqes aide des Cristiens et ferra chanter messe desouz arbre sechche, et puis larbre reuerdira et portera foille et fruit, pur le quelle miracle moint Sarazins et moint Iuys [creront et] se conuerteront a la ley Cristiene").²⁵

From the Dry Tree and dreams of Christian re-expansion—a forlorn hope to which *The Book* returns several times—the itinerary reaches Bethlehem itself, where another horticultural legend is related, here to explain the origin of roses. At first glance, this compelling little folktale (about a maiden wrongly sentenced to be burnt for fornication and saved by her prayers to God, who turns the burning branches into red roses and those not yet aflame into white ones)²⁶ seems to have wandered into the pilgrim's guide from another world; but a second look reveals it to be almost apropos, if still disconcertingly enigmatic, since it is a religious legend concerned with something like the nativity story's theme: patient female purity rewarded and wanton cruelty turned to a good end.

There is more to *The Book's* augmented account of Bethlehem than such folktales, however. There is also the tangible reality of relics and other physical traces of past deeds and their doers remembered by both popular and learned traditions. Thus, whereas William's references to some of the city's historical associations are quite perfunctory, especially in Jean le Long's rendering—"at

the edges of this city the innocents were killed, St. Jerome dwelt there . . . and still many others out of reverence for the place, and there they devoutly led their lives" ("es marches de ceste cite furent occis les innocens, saint jerome y demoura . . . et encore pluseurs aultres pour la reverence du lieu, et y ont devotement use leurs vies")²⁷—the *Mandeville*-author's account is more detailed and dramatic, making the memories more concrete and familiar, as at Constantinople.

The Innocents, for example, appear as a collection of real bones, while Jerome's epochal achievements (translating "la Bible et le psalter de ebreu [Hebrew] en latin") are explicitly recalled for *The Book's* lay audience and then depicted as stemming from an ordinary sort of labor: "And outside the church is his chair on which he sat when he translated them" ("Et de hors le moustier est sa chaire, sur quoi il seoit quant il les translata"). The most striking change, though, concerns Mary, whose postpartum traces at a nearby church allow her to be depicted as more human than Jerome: "And because she had too much milk in her breasts and that pained her, she squirted some of it there on the red marble stones, and the white spots are still on the stones" ("Et pur ceo qelle auoit trop de lait en ses mamelles et qe y ly fesoit mal, elle en getta illeosques sur pieres rouges de marbre, si qe vnqore sunt les techches blanches sur les pieres").²⁸

What is immediately striking—as well as characteristic—about this depiction of Bethlehem as a marvelous reliquary is its easy conflation of biblical, postbiblical, and apocryphal history, all of them being seen in their most ordinary, even banal, aspects: a way of recalling the Christian story that the *Mandeville*-author's work shares with the Corpus Christi plays, for example. The divine, the human, and the diabolical, as well as the physical, the intellectual, and the spiritual, occupy the same geographical and textual space, held up for viewing in a simple, mostly paratactic prose that does not call attention to itself, as though it were the "transparent" discourse of Truth itself.

From Bethlehem, the text's fourth pilgrimage stop after Mt. Sinai, *The Book* makes its leisurely way through Judaea and Samaria into Galilee, where traditionally the Holy Land was considered to end, before heading briefly into Syria. During this tour, textual space is parceled out roughly according to the perceived importance of each site, with Jerusalem, the earthly location of greatest interest to the *Mandeville*-author's projected audience, receiving almost as much as all the other places in the Holy Land together.

Like the preceding accounts, *The Book's* visit to Jerusalem rises on the foundation of William's *Liber*, which begins with a topographical overview, and then arranges the depiction according to both temporal and spatial criteria, arriving near the end at the crucial site, the Holy Sepulchre. Demon-

strating his theological knowledge, William follows his brief introductory description of each important site with a tidy chronological litany of the historical associations “in hoc loco”: “In this place God’s priest Melchisedech is believed to have offered God bread and wine *mystice* for the first time” (“In hoc loco Dei sacerdos Melchisedech creditur panem et vinum Deo mystice primitus obtulisse”). In addition, he sometimes attempts to heighten the effect of his descriptions with a rhetorical flourish—“And what person could look upon this place [Calvary] without tears . . . ?” (“Et quis homo hunc locum videre poterit sine lacrimis . . . ?”)—or with a memory that reinforces his status and authority, such as this one about the marble columns at Calvary that drip constantly with condensation: “the simple-minded say that they weep for and lament Christ’s death; which is not true, because, where nature suffices, there is no need to resort to miracles” (“simplices dicunt, quod defleant et plangent mortem Christi; quod verum non est, quia, ubi natura sufficit, non est ad miraculum recurrendum”). Following his own advice, William here recalls his relevant demystification of a similar “miracle” under the old imperial palace in Constantinople: “But I, upon seeing this, examined the nature of the stone, observed the surrounding place, and to the admiration of his majesty the emperor’s emir explained the natural cause of this fact. This greatly pleased him, and afterward he treated me with singular affection and honourable gratitude” (“Sed ego, hoc videns, naturam lapidis consideravi, circumstantiam loci adverti, amirato domini imperatoris causam naturalem hujus facti exposui, cui plurimum placuit, et extunc in singularem amorem et honoris gratitudinem me recollegit”).²⁹

Never one to debunk a religious marvel (though he does expose traffickers in false relics), the *Mandeville*-author here, as throughout his overwriting of William’s visit to Jerusalem, excises its personal and demystifying elements, while augmenting the account with material from a host of additional sources and reorganizing it. Thus, following the reworked introduction to the holy city, which combines topographical with historical information, *The Book* follows the Dominican’s passage through the Templum Domini, the Probatica Piscina (Pool of Bethesda), and Mt. Sion, but only after first visiting the Holy Sepulcher, the site that William describes as the culmination of his visit: having long delayed getting to Jerusalem, *The Book* does not follow its underlying source in tarrying still longer before approaching the desired end.

Once there, it offers quite a different tour from William’s. While both start with the standard description of the structure itself, the *Mandeville*-author shortens the *Liber*’s detailed architectural survey, and omits most of the rest of the account as well: William’s comments on the site’s non-Christian owners, past and present; his praise of the spot where Christ’s body was laid;

his enquiries concerning a stone devoutly kissed by local Christians (though keeping the kissed stone); and his boast about having a private mass celebrated on the Sepulcher itself, “because the emir in Jerusalem gave [him] the key to the building” (“quia admiratus in Hierusalem [ei] clavem ad domum”).³⁰

Omitting all this, the *Mandeville*-author instead offers a gathering of local lore, most of it concerned either with renowned figures and glorious moments in Christian history or with “evidence” of Christianity’s truth. Indeed, one of the most striking things about *The Book*’s account, apart from its fascinating clutter of “facts,” is the lack of interest in the event that the Sepulcher commemorates—as if that world-transforming event were more commonplace than the physical structures and the cultural associations of its memorial. This, to be sure, is also the case in William’s *Liber*, which effectively concludes with the story of his expertise in mineralogy. The principal difference between the two accounts, then, has to do not so much with matters of piety and faith, as with the kind and ordering of local detail that each author thought appropriate to his aims and projected audience.

After the revised opening description, for instance, *The Book* sets about feeding the popular appetite for religious marvels that the *Liber* starves, augmenting a seemingly minor detail—about the little building “having no window and lit with candles or by a lamp” (“nullam habens fenestram, [domuncula] candelis vel lampade illustratur”)—with a story about a lamp that quenches itself on Good Friday and lights up at the time of the resurrection. From this miracle (got from William of Tyre’s *Continuator*), the author moves to William’s closing description of Calvary, omitting the orthodox explanation of God’s sacrifice for a marvelous affirmation of typological history linked with the glory days of the crusades. In the mortice that held the cross “Adam’s head was found after Noah’s flood, as a sign that Adam’s sins would be redeemed in that same place” (“fuiſt troue la teſte Adam apres le dilu- uie de Noe, en ſigne qe les pecches Adam ſerroient rechattez en ceo memes lieu”), the very spot where Abraham made his sacrifice and before which lie the tombs of Godfrey of Bouillon, Baldwin “and others who were Christian kings of Jerusalem” (“et autres qi furent Criſtiens rois de Ieruſalem”).³¹

And the list goes on, most of it recording more “proofs” of Christianity’s universality. Among other things, the text cites a pair of inscriptions in Latin and (garbled) Greek (the former translating the latter) asserting that this saving site is the world’s center and the ground of its salvation, and mentions the *Liber*’s “weeping” columns (qualified by “some say”), as well as Helen’s discovery of the True Cross, Constantine’s conquest of Asia (aided by his having one of the four Crucifixion nails in his horse’s bridle), the “compas”

where Joseph of Arimathea laid the dead Christ, said to be the exact center of the world, and the variant but devoutly sung mass of the Indian Christians. Neatly buried in the middle of this faith-confirming litany, moreover, with its echoes of both the exordium and the visit to Constantinople, is yet another prophecy of Christian re-expansion, this one linked to Constantine's expansive exploits: "And there were after that time in those marches many wise hermits, about whom the book of the Life of the Fathers speaks. And now they are all Saracens and pagans there. But, when it shall please God, just as this land was lost through the Christians' sins, so will it be regained through their prowess, with God's help" ("Et mult y auoit apres cel temps en celle marches des prodhommes heremites, dont ly liueres de la Vie des Pieres emparle. Et maintenant y sont touz Sarazins et paiens. Mes, quant il plerra a Dieu, si come celle terre ad estee perdue par les pecches des Cristiens, auxi serra elle regaigne par la pruesse de eaux, al eide de Dieu").³²

Religious Wonders Enhanced or Undone, and Prophecies Ignored

Excluding the Vulgate Latin Version, whose redactor resembles the *Liber's* at once sceptical and orthodox author more than the broad-minded (or marvel-mongering) *Mandeville*-author, and whose most striking change here is the redactor's use of Sir John to refute the claim that Jerusalem is at the world's center,³³ *The Book's* textual isotopes render its passage through the holy places much as it appears in the Continental and Insular Versions. Instead of undoing the religious marvels or giving a clearer order to the pleasant clutter of religious memorabilia in the manner of the Latin redaction, some of the versions make their mark by altering details in notable ways, typically to enhance the air of marvelous piety. The prophecies of the Holy Land's recovery, in contrast, receive no enhancement, only silent resistance or tinkering with minor details.

The Metrical and Vulgate Latin Versions, for example, omit both of the consoling prophecies discussed in the previous section, and the von Diemeringen and Bodley Versions omit the second. In keeping the first prophecy, moreover, at least two copies of the von Diemeringen Version optimistically claim that "all" Jews and Saracens (not just "many") will be converted. Likewise notable is Velser's tinkering with the prophecy, limiting it to the Holy Land's recovery and the Dry Tree's regreening, since the tree by itself has already prompted many conversions: "And on account of signs from the same tree many Jews and pagans have converted to Christian belief" ("Und von

des selben bomes wegen zaichen so hond sich bekert manig juden und haiden zû cristenlichem gelouben”) — a change that may explain the more emphatic first-person form of the second prophecy: “But in fact we have to win back our land and our inheritance, which God promised us, because his grace wills” (“Aber doch müssen wir unser land wider gewinnen und unser erb, daz uns gott verhaissen hatt, wenn sin gnad wil”).³⁴

Of the isotopic changes to the religious marvels, one of the most memorable is also the smallest: the von Diemeringen Version’s addition of a single sentence to the mention of the spots left in a Bethlehem church by Mary’s breast milk. The result is a showy authenticating gesture that neatly shifts the focus from a local fact to its effect on a pilgrim’s piety: “And I have kissed the spots” (“Und ich han die flecken gekusset”). If von Diemeringen made use of the Vulgate Latin rendering, as his prologue claims, then he went his own way here, since the latter describes the spots by noting how “the rather foolish relate” (“simpliciores narrant”) that they were caused by Mary’s milk. No less memorable than von Diemeringen’s intervention is that of his German compatriot, Michel Velser, who authenticates Constantine’s conquering bridle (mentioned in the account of the Sepulchre) with a characteristic personal comment, stating that “the bit itself” (“das selb gebiß”) is now in the Church of St. Thecla in Milan: “And anyone can see it who has been in Milan” (“Und daz mag ain yeglicher sehen der ze Mayland ist geweßen”).³⁵

Velser also enhances the depiction of the miraculous lamp that annually marks Jesus’s death and resurrection, but this time by reworking the *Mandeville*-author’s laconic prose much as the latter overwrites his sources. For example, the statement “and on Good Friday it goes out by itself, and then resumes on resurrection day at the hour when our lord arose from death to life” (“et au vendredy saint elle estaint de li meismes, et puis se reprent le iour de la resurreccion a telle heure que nostre seigneur se releua de mort a vie”) is rhetorically reshaped to make the lamp’s self-quenching symmetrical with its relighting: “it always goes out then on holy Good Friday at the time when God gave up his soul . . . and remains thus quenched until the time when our lord arose from the dead” (“die erlischett nûmer denn an dem hailigen karfritag umb die zitt als gott sinen gaist uff gab . . . und belipt also erloschen byß an die zitt als unser herre erstünd von dem tod”). Probably still more rhetorically effective in the medieval context than this symmetrical sentence would have been the claims that frame Velser’s description: “Now you ought to know and hear about a great sign and a wonder” (“Nun solent ir wissa und hören ain gros zaichen und wunder”); “and it is a sign from God” (“und ist ain zaichen von gott”). One man’s sign of God, though, may be another’s mark of fraud — this time of the Vulgate Latin redactor, who is

unusually tentative here, as though it were unwise to be too sceptical of a popular miracle ancillary to the greatest miracle of all:

quod (si ita est) evidens diuini beneficii miraculum est. Et quamuis id plurimi Christiani simpliciter in magno pietatis merito credant, plerisque tamen est in suspicione. Forte talia Sarraceni custodes sepulchri fingentes diuulgauerunt, pro augendo emolumenta tributi, quod inde resultaret, seu oblationum quae dantur.³⁶

this (if it is so) is a miracle showing divine beneficence. And albeit that very many Christians naïvely believe it by the great virtue of their piety, it is nonetheless doubted by very many. Perhaps the Sepulcher's Saracen attendants, inventing it, broadcast such things to increase profits from the tribute that would result, or the offerings that are given.

Sir John Among the Saracens

Cynical as the Vulgate Latin Version's comment is, it is not quite as unman-devillean as it may seem. In fact, it recalls an authenticating gesture in *The Book's* account of Cairo's balm garden, when Sir John—after noting that he has not seen the balm said to grow in Ynde where Alexander spoke with the trees of the sun and the moon (“for I have not been that far up, for there are too many dangerous journeys”; “qar ico nay pas estee tant auant, qar y ad trop des perilouses passages”)—explains how to test local balm for purity, “for the Saracens adulterate it in order to deceive the Christians, as I have many times seen [and shown]” (“qar les Sarazins le sophistekent pur desceuier les Crisiens, si qe iay veu plusours foitz [et prouue]”).³⁷

This earlier remark—which another writer might have made part of a litany of abuse—stands out as one of the very few simple-minded criticisms that the *Mandeville*-author's work makes of those whom his pro-crusading exordium calls “mescreantz.” Indeed, *The Book's* account of Saracen politics and religion tends to be positive, especially when presented as based on Sir John's first-hand knowledge. These “personal” moments are often richly ironic, implying as they do that acquaintance with Otherness can undermine negative stereotypes, even though the more memorable and important of them suggest that the *Mandeville*-author is interested in Saracen Otherness not merely in itself, but also so as to flatter and criticize the cultural Self of his projected audience by reconfirming Christianity's universal superiority, exposing the laxness of Latin Christian practice, and offering the consoling hope of re-expansion as a motive for religious reform.

Sir John makes some nine appearances on the textual stage of “his

memoirs" in the biblical East. Of these, one is directly adapted from a self-aggrandizing gesture made by William of Boldensele, three are almost small enough to miss, and six have to do with the Saracens. Specifically, the scenes consist of his claims in Constantinople to have seen and to possess certain Passion relics; in Babylon to have served the Sultan as a soldier and been offered a noble marriage if he would renounce his faith, as well as to have seen the Saracen deceit with balm; at Mt. Sinai to have scolded the monks for concealing a miracle that would increase popular devotion; en route to Jerusalem to have been with the Sultan when the Bedouins were warring against him; in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to have had special freedom of movement owing to the Sultan's letters;³⁸ in the *Templum Domini* to have imitated the pious Saracens in removing his shoes before worship; in the supplementary itineraries to Jerusalem not to have gone by way of Tartary; and finally in the coda on Islam to have conversed with the Sultan about Latin Christian practice.

Occurring as unexpectedly as they do in the text's mostly third-person descriptions, explanations, and narratives, Sir John's appearances are among the most memorable passages in *The Book*, and few readers, I suspect, would side with the Victorian reviewer who noted that "it is the occasional ["thumping"] assertion that 'I, John Mandeville', did so and so which is as the fly in the ointment, and which has converted what would otherwise be an excellent book of travel into a standing illustration in the art of imposture." The point of Sir John's imitating Saracen piety in the *Templum Domini*, for instance, is hardly imposture, and even the genuine impostures are both historically plausible and skillfully rhetorical, as in the Knight's subtly comic claim to be retailing inside knowledge about the sultanate from an orthodox Christian viewpoint: "I ought to know it well, for I dwelt with him a great space of time as a soldier in his wars against the Bedouins. And he would have married me most highly to a landed prince's daughter and given me a great inheritance, if I had wanted to deny my creator; but I had no desire for anything that he could have promised me" ("Ieo le doy bien sauoir, qar ieo demorray soudeour oue luy en ses guerres grant piece de temps encontre les Bedoins. Et me eust mariez mult hautement au file de prince terrien et done des grantz heritages, si ieo vosisse auoir renoie mon creatour; mes ieo nauoie talent pur nul auoir qil me poait promettre").³⁹

Bold it certainly is, but this claim is hardly as "thumping" as the Bodley Version's Musaeo copy, which has Sir John make this assertion in the coda on Saracen beliefs: "Trowith this wel, for this haue I bothe herd and sen with mynne cyne and mynne eryn and myne felawys that were with me that weryn of dyuers regionys, for wete ye wel that al be it wondyr to youre heryng, I

am not set to lye yow lesyngis [lies]. Trowith yif ye welyn." However set he is "to lie us lies," the *Mandeville*-author uses the quasi-juridical phrase "I John Mandeville" only in the exordium and epilogue. It is the textual isotopes that use the phrase elsewhere, either to add to Sir John's deeds or to bolster their truth-value, as in the Egerton text's change to the claim that the fish in Pres-ter John's Land taste delicious: "I Iohn Maundeuell ete of þam, and þarfore trowez it, for sikerly it es soth."⁴⁰

It is possible, as some have argued, that Sir John's appearances in the biblical East build on the *Mandeville*-author's own experiences. After all, if the author did make a pilgrimage (and his book's being a compilation is no argument either way), he could have had an audience with the Sultan and petitioned his favor, as Symon Semeonis did in 1323, or even served under him as a mercenary, as some Christians did, with or without Church approval; or he might simply have found himself, like Margery Kempe, well treated by the Muslim guides that pilgrims required. If so, then we need only suppose that, in making *The Book*, the author recast his experiences to suit his rhetorical and ideological aims, or perhaps to have some fun at his audience's expense: as Greenblatt says, "the principle of the eyewitness received in this [multi-]text an unusual elaboration."⁴¹

It is much more likely, however, that Sir John's appearances are all fictional, since some of them have known sources, while others have obvious literary analogues. The military service, for instance, and the consequent reward of a profitable marriage recall motifs stretching back at least to Lucian's *True Story*. Lucian, of course, would have been unknown to the *Mandeville*-author, but not the stories of love affairs between Christian knights and Saracen princesses, since from the twelfth century these were a staple of the chansons de geste, romances, and some chronicles, in which, as Benjamin Kedar notes, the dream of "Saracen conversion became entwined with two essential components of the chivalrous culture: the good fight and the pursuit of ladies." It is a sign of the *Mandeville*-author's gifts as an anecdotalist that he makes fresh use of a stock motif, turning it into a test of Sir John's faith rather than a simple demonstration of Christianity's superiority (typically, the Saracen converts to marry the Christian). At the same time, as Frank Grady suggests, the motif is used here to signal the priority of the "historical and ethnographic project" and downplay the "romance perspective."⁴²

In fact, whether Sir John appears as a pious knight untempted by ladies and land, a consumer watchdog, or a privileged pilgrim, his appearances often reveal him as a *histor*: as someone who, like Herodotus, goes out of his way to find and verify historical and ethnographic information, and who is thereby

entitled to comment on it, even to draw the odd moral from it. Verification is sometimes impossible, of course, and a *histor* who knew all would soon discredit himself. A good rhetorician will therefore admit to ignorance or inadequacy on occasion, thus turning negative “researches” to positive effect, as the *Mandeville*-author has Sir John do in the balm garden and at Mt. Sinai, attempting to create enough trust between the “I” and the audience to allow the text to do its ideological work. Furthermore, and no less significantly in a book devoted above all to “choses estranges,” the admission of ignorance functions like the disclaimer “dit homme” by allowing the *histor* to record material without necessarily vouching for it.⁴³

Of all Sir John’s appearances as *histor*, the most significant is his private colloquy with the Sultan, which occurs in the account of Islam that closes *The Book*’s survey of the biblical East—an account that derives in part from William of Tripoli’s *Tractatus de statu Saracenorum* (1273) and that replaces the standard medieval calumnies against the faith and its prophet with an assessment of the closeness of Saracen belief to Christian (making them easy converts), as well as a Saracen critique of Latin Christian laxness and Saracen prophecies of their own demise and the loss of the Holy Land after Christian reform.⁴⁴

This idiosyncratic account opens in *The Book*’s usual fashion, with a first-person announcement of the new subject. Unusually, however, the opening names the source of its information, and the source is a book: the Koran. Apart from the many biblical quotations (in untranslated Latin) and the odd reference to authorities such as the *Vitae patrum* or the Church Fathers, this passage stands out as the most important exception to Howard’s claim that the *Mandeville*-author avoided “bookishness . . . chos[ing instead] to maintain the stance . . . of an eye-witness who reports from memory.” The exception is important, because the appeal to a book is presented as an act of memory in which Sir John recalls both his eyewitness knowledge and the results of his *historical* enquiries:

si vous voillez sauoir vn partie de lour ley et de lour creauce, ieo lez vous deuiseray, solonc ceo qe lour liuere, qad a noun Alkaroun, le deuise. . . . En la quele il est escript . . . si qe ieo ai souent litz et regarde, qe ly bons irrount en paradys et luy malueis en enfer. . . . Et si homme lour demande qele paradys ils entendent, ils dient. . . .⁴⁵

if you would like to know a part of their law and of their belief, I shall describe them to you, according to *what their book says* which is called Alkoran. . . . In which it is written . . . *as I have often read and seen*, that the good will go to paradise and the wicked to hell. . . . And *if one asks them* what paradise they mean, *they say*. . . .

Having established his right to speak on Islam, Sir John disappears into the text's third-person exposition, which is punctuated with phrases like "they say," "they believe," and "their book says." The account's first topic, as the quotation reveals, is one that fascinated European Christians for centuries: the Muslim conception of Paradise (in the Egerton Version the enumeration of Paradise's erotic pleasures ends with the interpolated comment "and þis es agayne oure lawe," as though anyone could have doubted it). From Paradise the text passes to Koranic statements about, respectively, the Virgin Mary, the Incarnation, Doomsday, and the prophet Jesus, whom, it is implied, the Saracens in effect accept as the Messiah. Then, after mentioning the Saracen practice of fasting, the text returns to a theme dear to the *Mandeville*-author's heart: Jewish wickedness and waywardness, though now according to the Koran, a move that makes Christians and Saracens potential allies. The Koran has a few remarks on Christian misbeliefs as well, but these are rebutted flat out: "and in this their faith errs" ("et en ceo falt lour foy").⁴⁶

Yet if it errs, the text suggests, it is also the case that the Saracens admit to believing in most of the principal articles of Christianity, an admission used here to advance the cause of overseas missionary work, since conversion will be easy (the crusading option has already been advanced in the exordium; as Kedar has shown, the two options were often seen as complementary). And it is not just Christianity's superiority that will make this possible; it is also the Saracens' piety and their understanding of faith:

Et auxi dient ils qils scient bien par les prophecies qe la loy Machomet faudra, auxi come ad fait la loy des Iuys qi est faillie, et qe la ley de poeple Cristiene durera iusques au fin de monde. . . . Item ly Sarazins dient qe Iuys sont malueis, qar ils ont violet la loy qe Dieu lour enuoia par Moyses. Et ly Cristiens sont malueis, si come ils dient, qar ils ne gardent mie les preceptz des Eeuangelies qe Ihesu Crist lour deuisa.⁴⁷

And they also say that they know well by prophecies that Machomet's law will fail, just as the Jews' law did, which has failed, and that the law of the Christian people shall endure until the end of the world. . . . Also the Saracens say that the Jews are wicked, for they have broken the law which God sent them through Moses. And the Christians are wicked, as they say, for they do not keep at all the precepts of the Gospels which Jesus Christ explained to them.

Whether considered as rhetoric or as ideology—and it is both—this is a crucial passage in *The Book*, offering "information," consolation, and a challenge to medieval Christian audiences. Like much of the text, especially as it moves beyond the Holy Land, it dwells on both difference and similarity, using the former to reassert Christianity's superiority, and the latter to expand

Christendom *in potentia*. In the present case, the exordium's Enemy are seen as proto-Christians, who are now to be brought within the fold not by the sword, but by the word (this idea is the most important of the *Mandeville*-author's borrowings from William of Tripoli). An Enemy is still needed, though, and the Jews are made to serve, being presented as inimical to Saracens and Christians alike.⁴⁸

Still, there is more than an indirect attack on the Jews at the close of the quoted passage; there is also a critique of Christian malpractice which, in context, amounts to a (Saracen) assertion that Christians are no better than Jews.⁴⁹ Having made such a damning equation, *The Book* does not return to its tendentious exposition of Saracen beliefs, as one might expect; rather, it swerves into a satire on Christian misbehavior that recalls but revises the exordium's critique, and is handled with greater rhetorical skill, placing its unpleasant truths in the mouth of the Sultan—whose right to speak on the matter has already been established in *The Book*'s several references to his subjects' peaceful, honorable, and pious behavior. Significantly, the criticism itself comes during a private conversation, the Sultan being tactful enough not to embarrass his English servant by publicly denouncing his coreligionists. Quite close in many respects to an exemplary story in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*, the scene also anticipates moments in *Guliver's Travels*: "And he asked me how the Christians in our countries governed themselves; and I told him very well, thank God" ("Si me demanda, coment les Cristiens se gouverneeront en noz pays; et ly ditz qe bien, Dieu gracies").⁵⁰

With this answer Sir John reveals himself attempting to defend his fellow Christians, a strategy designed to earn him the audience's good will at a crucial moment. But this is a private conversation, and the Sultan is interested only in the truth: "And he said to me, 'Truly, they do not'" ("Et il me dit qe 'Verayment qe non fount'"). If Sir John has an answer, the Sultan does not wait for it; instead, he launches into an attack on Christian misbehavior starting with the clerical estate and proceeding by way of the commons to all Christians. The Sultan's complaints are the usual ones of medieval satire: the clergy set a bad example to the commons, who therefore violate holidays by drinking and eating like animals, and all Christians do what they can to deceive one another and are so proud that they dress outrageously; rather than imitate Christ, they covet money enough to sell their sisters, daughters, wives, to whom they are unfaithful, breaking the law that Jesus set out for their salvation (the imagined audience is clearly male). But customary though they are, the complaints are delivered with stylistic flair and rhetorical force.

Particularly effective is the *Mandeville*-author's strategy of having the Sultan attack "Christians" rather than "you Christians," since this makes the

audience seem partly exempt and allows the criticism to do its work indirectly. The collective “you” is addressed only at the end of the diatribe, where the padded stick of indirect criticism gives way to the fantastic carrot of flattery and prophecy: “And thus [also] for their sins they have lost all this land which we possess. For on account of their sins *your* God has placed them in our hands, not by our strength. . . . For we know for a truth [for certain] that when *you* serve God well and he wants to help *you*, no one could counter [can last against] *you*” (“Et ensi [aussi] pur lour pecches ont ils perduz tot cest terre, qe nous tenons. Qar pur lour pecches *vostre* Dieu les bailla en noz mains, non pas par force de nous. . . . Qar nous sauons bien de voir [certain] qe, quant *vous* bien seruez Dieu et il *vous* voet aider, nul purroit contre [peut durer encontre] *vous*”).⁵¹

At the end of this diatribe, the *Mandeville*-author has the Knight step forward with a brief response, and the response is particularly subtle. Instead of acknowledging or denying the Sultan’s charges, or confirming his prophecies, Sir John replies with a polite yet pointed question: “then I asked him how he thus knew the state of the Christians” (“Lors ieo luy demanday comment il sauoit ensi lestat des Cristiens”).⁵² This is not the sort of response that homiletic denunciations of Christian misbehavior normally elicit in medieval texts. But then the *Mandeville*-author has not attempted simply to reproduce the stock-in-trade of religious satire; he has gone to great lengths—to Egypt, in fact—to recover its commonplaces, and he has done so without allowing the text to neglect other important rhetorical concerns. Sir John’s reply, for instance, shows the Knight still playing the role of *histor*, if now to authenticate a source whose moral authority he has already established, while his question makes the passage more complex by momentarily shifting the focus away from the moral concerns just raised in favor of those having to do with ethnographic truth and the uses to which it can be put.

Thus, when the Sultan replies with his likewise startling answer—he knows the state of the Christians because he dispatches people disguised as merchants to be spies—he is in effect justifying Sir John’s service at his Infidel court by making him a kind of counterspy. Lest the point be missed, the *Mandeville*-author follows this revelation with an impressive little scene that adds an unanticipated novelty to *The Book*’s already extensive catalogue of overseas wonders and reveals Sir John responding with dramatic rightness: “And he showed me four who were great lords of the country, who described to me our countries and the other countries of Christendom as well as if they had been of the country. And they spoke the most beautiful French, and the Sultan also, at which I was much amazed” (“Si me moustra iiii. qestoient grantz seignurs el pais, qi me deuiseeront noz pais et les autres pais des Cris-

tienne auxi bien qe sils fuissent del pais. Et parloient mult bele francois, et ly soudan auxint, dont ieo me merueillay mult”).⁵³ Where is the Christian lord, the text implies, who could orchestrate such a scene or so impressively hint at the power of knowledge? And what, it may even suggest to those who know, has come of the chairs of Oriental languages which in 1312 Pope Clement V ordered established at the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca?⁵⁴ If the Saracens are as close to Christian beliefs as *The Book* suggests, then Christian practice cannot be merely an “internal” matter, let alone a private one.

The tables have clearly been turned in this account, and the observers have become the observed, however briefly. As so often in *The Book*, the ethnographic portrait of the Other suddenly shifts to become a Self-critical mirror—which also flatters by promising a glorious future as a reward for reform. In a move reminiscent of the exordium (“dear God, what love he had towards his subjects”), the text now reaches an emotional climax as Sir John acknowledges the truth of the Sultan’s intelligence:

Eylas! come ceo est [grants dommages et] grant esclandre a nostre foy et a nostre loy, quant gentz qi nont foy ne loy nous reprouent [ainsi] *et noz pecches reprehendent*, et cils qi duissent par noz bons ensamples et par nostre acceptable vie estre conuertez a la loy Thesu Crist sont par noz malueistees et par nous [pour nos erreurs] elloinez et estrangez de la seinte verraye creance! Si nest mie merueille, sils nous appellent malucysz, qar ils dient voier.⁵⁵

Alas! what a [great harm and] great insult this is to our faith and to our law when people who have no faith or law reprove us *and reprehend our sins*, and those who by our good examples and by our acceptable life ought to be converted to the law of Jesus Christ are by our misdeeds and by ourselves [by our errors] distanced and estranged from the blessed true belief! And no wonder if they call us wicked, for they speak the truth.

With these reproving words, Sir John’s remarkable colloquy with the Sultan comes to a close; and an account that began like the earlier one about the Greek Christians, but suddenly took a different turn and became part of *The Book*’s intermittent argument for devotional reform, returns to its initial manner and concerns. What follows is a brief life of Muhammad. Compiled as usual from several sources, the life is not especially sympathetic, but neither is it especially negative, even if it does conclude on a dissonant note by stating that some Saracens drink on the sly and some Christians convert to Islam “out of simplicity, or out of poverty, or out of wickedness” (“pur simpletee, ou pur pouerte, ou pur malueistee”)—a claim implying that the religions on each

side of the mirror are not quite the same, and that Sir John and his coreligionists might go among the Saracens, but they can never genuinely be of them.⁵⁶

Sir John, the Sultan, and *The Book's* Isotopes

The English Knight's multipurpose appearances, as hinted above, were particularly likely to be multiplied or adapted in *The Book's* textual isotopes, and nowhere are the adaptations more telling than in his two scenes with the Sultan. With the usual exception of the Vulgate Latin, the various translations alter the first scene only in subtle ways, but three versions (the Latin, von Diemeringen, and Metrical) make substantial changes to the colloquy, the latter two by omitting it outright (von Diemeringen's Version, it will be recalled, also displaces the entire account of Islam to the work's close),⁵⁷ and the Vulgate Latin by enhancing the rhetorical appeal for Christian reform.

In the first scene, for instance, three renderings (the Bodley Rawlinson copy, Cotton, and Velser) underline the piety motivating Sir John's refusal of the Sultan's reward by having him acknowledge God's help: "through God's grace I had no desire for that" ("des ich von den gnaden gottz kainen mût het"). In contrast, the Egerton Version has Sir John give no explanation or thanks at all, neatly contrasting the extravagant offer with the laconic response: "bot I wald nozt." Going further than the Egerton Version, the Vulgate Latin mentions neither God nor the Knight's refusal, as though each would have dignified the reward's absurdity. Piety will eventually also be this version's concern in its account of the Saracen world, but the more important changes here serve to enhance the attempt at authentication. Thus, Sir John's confession (as it were) and muted claim to knowledge appear in the middle of the larger ethnohistory of the Mamluk sultanate, at the end rather than at the outset of the synopsis of its political history, when "Melec Mandibron" is named, who "was Sultan when I departed" ("fuiſt ſoudan quant ieo men parti"), as the Continental and Insular Versions state. In addition, the Sultan's offer is shown to be far less persuasive than the urgings of a trustworthy fellow Christian whom the Knight saw at court. At the end of its revised account of the Sultan's army and courtly behavior—the text omits all reference to his polygamy and his harem—the Latin redaction has Sir John offer a unique and tantalizing glimpse of the "reality" behind *The Book*:

Porro ego in Curia manens, vidi circa Soldanum vnum venerabilem, & expertum medicum, de nostris partibus oriundum. . . . Nos tamen raro inuicem conuenimus ad colloquium, eo quod meum seruitium cum suo modicum congruebat: longo autem postea

tempore, & ab illo loco remote, videlicet in Leodij ciuitate, composui hortatu & adiutorio eiusdem venerabilis viri hunc tractatum, sicut in fine operis totius enarrabo.⁵⁸

While staying at court I saw around the Sultan a distinguished and able physician originally from our regions. . . . But we seldom came together to speak, because my duties had little to do with his. Yet a long time after and far from this place, namely in the city of Liège, I composed this treatise at the urging and with the help of this same distinguished man, as I shall relate more fully at the end of the whole work.

The greatest surprise of this interpolated claim is that the capable physician is a real person, Master Jean à la Barbe, also known as Jean de Bourgogne, author of a plague treatise,⁵⁹ and his fuller reappearance at *The Book's* conclusion is the most convincing of the several attempts made by redactors to authenticate the English Knight's "memoirs" as a whole. As noted in chapter 8, where those attempts are discussed, the closing Liège interpolation occurs in both the Vulgate Latin and the Interpolated Continental Versions, but the striking proleptic reference to it quoted above occurs in the Latin alone, where it represents the redactor's endeavor not simply to make fuller use of his French source, but also to anticipate and thus help underwrite the overwritten conclusion.

The Vulgate Latin's unique interpolation likewise enhances the credibility of Sir John's claim that the account of Saracen beliefs is based on personal knowledge and readings of the Koran—the latter part of this claim being omitted in the Bodley and von Diemeringen Versions, and considerably reduced in the Velser ("I too have seen the said book"; "und daz selb buch hon ich ouch gesehen"), as though such a scholarly accomplishment were beyond the capabilities of a freelance Christian soldier. In contrast, the normally contrary Vulgate Latin Version draws fuller attention to Sir John's personal knowledge and it names even more precisely than does the *Mandeville*-author the ostensible sources of the essay in comparative religion: "Iam restat vt de secta Saracenorum aliquid scribam vel compendiose, *secundum quod cum ijs frequenter colloquendo audiui*, & liber Mahometi, quem Alcaron . . . vocant, ijs praecipit, *sicut illum saepe inspexi, & studiose perlegi*" ("now it remains for me to write something concise about the sect of the Saracens, *according to what I have frequently heard in conversation with them*, and [what] Mahomet's book, which they call Alcaron . . . , teaches them, *as I have often examined it and diligently read it through*").⁶⁰

Just as several intermediaries thought this framing fiction a little too unsubtle, and toned it down, so Velser and the Bodley and Egerton redactors found the rhetorical strategy of indirect criticism in the Sultan's address to Sir John (the use of "they" for the Christians instead of "you") to be just the

opposite, and they altered the subtle play of pronouns, introducing the “you” earlier on and more consistently. In addition, the Bodley and Egerton render the Sultan’s sermon as though they were clerics themselves. As this brief excerpt reveals, the Egerton maker’s handling of the prose is characteristically fine, enhancing the sermon’s rhetorical force through far more than the carefully manipulated pronouns alone (note, for instance, the nicely placed “3a,” or “yea”):⁶¹

Et si sont si couetous qe pur vn poy dargent ils vendent lours filz, lours seors, lours propres femmes pur mettre a luxurie. Et lun forstret la femme al autre, et nul ne tient foy al autre; mes violent tot lour ley qe Ihesus lour auoit baille et deuse pur lour saluement. Et ensi pur lour pecches ont ils perduz tot cest terre.

And they are so covetous that for a little money they sell their children, their sisters, their own wives into debauchery. And each takes the other’s wife, and no one keeps faith with another; but they break all the law that Jesus sent them and made for their salvation. And thus for their sins they have lost all this land.

For *Cristen men* er so *prowde*, so *enuyous*, so *grete glotouns*, and so *licherous*, and *herto* so full of couetise, þat for a lytill *siluer* þai will sell þaire doghters, þaire sisters, 3a and þaire awen wyfes, to lat men lye by þam. And ilk ane takes oþer wyf, and nane haldez his fayth till oþer; and so þe lawe þat Criste gaffe 3ow wikkidly and ill 3e despise and brekez it. And certaynely for 3our synne 3e hafe lost all þis land.

Unlike the Egerton, Bodley, and Velser Versions, the Latin Vulgate tidies up the sermon’s pronouns in the opposite direction, keeping them in the third-person plural throughout, so that the Sultan’s criticism remains indirect, although like the first two, this redaction puts its characteristic stamp on the sermon. Among other things, it removes all reference to the sex trade, instead drawing out the attack on fashionable clothing (a standard clerical complaint), and it deletes the reference to Saracen prophecies of Christian re-expansion, while keeping the Sultan’s predictions in simplified form. Having adapted the sermon, the Vulgate Latin redactor reworks even more fully the ensuing exchange between the Knight and the Sultan, beginning with Sir John’s laconic response—although he is not alone in altering the response. In the Velser, Bodley, and Egerton Versions, for instance, Sir John asks his question *respectfully*, making it clear that he agrees with the Sultan’s assessment of Christian behavior, and in the Egerton text he also notes that there is more to tell: “When I had herd þe sowdan speke þir wordes and many ma whilk I will nozt tell at þis tyme, I asked him with grete reuerence, how he come to þus mykill knawynge of þe state of Cristiantee.” But none of these versions reveals

Sir John's troubled state of mind, nor do they transform the scene in which he learns about the Saracen spies—who are interested in geography as well as *mores*—or the closing commentary (quoted in the next paragraph) in which he acknowledges the shameful truth:

Ad hoc ego vltra confusus & stupefactus, nequii inuenire responsum: verebar enim obloqui veritati, quamvis ab Infidelis ore prolatae, & vultu prae rubore demisso percunctatus sum, Domine, salua reuerentia, qualiter potestis ita plene hoc noscere? De hominibus (ait) meis interdum mitto ad modum Mercatorum per terras . . . Christianorum . . . ac per illos singula exploro, tam de statu Imperatoris, ac Pontificum, Principum, ac Sacerdotum, quam Praelatorum, nec non acuora, prouincias, ac distinctiones earum.⁶²

At this I was so confused and stunned I could not find a response; I truly shrink from contradicting the truth, even when brought forth from the mouth of an Infidel, and my face fallen with shame I enquired, "Lord, saving your reverence, how can you know this so thoroughly." "From my men," he said; "I send them at times in the guise of Merchants through Christian lands . . . and through each of them I spy out the state of the Emperor, and Popes, Princes, and Priests as much as that of Prelates, and likewise their waterways, provinces, and subdivisions."

At this point, as in the Continental and Insular Versions, the Sultan recalls four of his lords, but in the Vulgate Latin Version they reveal to Sir John their *geographical* knowledge of England and other Christian lands, all of them, like their employer, speaking "bene et directe" in the language of the Franks. These revelations leave the Knight speechless yet again: "So I fell silent at all this, troubled in mind, thinking, and lamenting each sin, to keep the matter to myself in this way" ("Itaque in omnibus his mente consternatus obmutui, cogitans, & dolens de peccatis singulis, rem taliter se habere"). Unable or unwilling to respond in the Sultan's presence, Sir John makes up for his former silence by turning now to the audience not with an anguished recognition of the charges leveled against his fellow faithful, as in most versions, but with a request that every Christian strive toward personal reform so that the Holy Land can be recovered and the Saracens converted. The Vulgate Latin redactor, then, has the Knight give direct voice to what he only hints at in the Continental and Insular Versions:

Nunc pie igitur (rogo) consideremus, & corde attendamus, quanta fit confusionis, & qualis opprobrij, dum Christiani nominis inimici nobis nostra exprobrant crimina. Et studeat quilibet in melius emendare, quatenus (Deo propitio) possit in breui tempore, haec de qua loquimur, terra Deo delecta, haec sacrosancta terra, haec filijs Dei promissa, nobis Dei adoptiuis restitui: vel certe, quod magis exorandum est, ipsi Sarraceni ad fidem Catholicam, & Christianam obedientiam, Ecclesiae filijs aggregari,

vt simul omnes per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum consubstantialem Dei filium perueniamus ad caelestem Paradisum.⁶³

Now therefore, I ask, let us piously consider and take to heart how much confusion is created and what opprobrium so long as the enemies of the Christian name reproach us for our misdeeds. And let each person be zealous to improve, as much as he can (God being kind) in a short time, in order that this [land] of which we speak, a land delightful to God, this sacrosanct land, promised to the sons of God, be restored to us, God's adopted: or indeed, what is more highly to be urged, that these Saracens be brought to the Catholic faith and Christian obedience by the sons of the Church, so that together through our Lord Jesus Christ, God's consubstantial son, we all may reach the heavenly Paradise.

In context, the quoted request is especially powerful, since it comes at the very close of *The Book's* account of the Holy Land. And it is this—the deliberate displacement of the colloquy itself—that is the Vulgate Latin redactor's most significant and creative move in his reworking of the *Mandeville*-author's depiction of the Saracen world, perhaps even in his treatment of *The Book* as a whole. Where nearly every other redactor leaves Sir John's encounter with the Sultan in place between the exposition of Saracen beliefs and the life of Muhammad, the Latin redactor recognizes the scene's potential as a rhetorical and ideological summing up of the pilgrim's guide. Instead of an alphabet—the diverting “chose estranges” of ethnography—Latin readers get a dramatic study in international intrigue and flattering piety along with a challenging vision of a much expanded Christendom as the full stop to the tour of the biblical East.⁶⁴

With perhaps the partial exception of the thoroughly overwritten journey in the Vulgate Latin Version, *The Book's* errant survey of the Christian pilgrim's East, in whatever textual isotope one reads, conjures up a world so varied that it can still offer an engrossing vicarious voyage, even if one shares few beliefs and values with the *Mandeville*-author's projected audience.⁶⁵ As this and the preceding chapter have revealed, the author took a slightly unusual book that remains valuable as a historical document (William's *Liber*), and, with the help of heterogeneous material borrowed from a representative fourteenth-century library of religious, historical, and geographical writings, refabricated it into a quasi-encyclopedia of his culture's fascination with “la terre d'outre mer” broadly defined, an anthology that others continued to rework in transmission. Far more than its textual template, then, the refabricated book comes to us as a multiple and sometimes self-contradictory trace—possibly the “single” most important medieval trace therefore—of the

long-lived practices not only of Christian pilgrimage and its writing, but also of the (typically) silent overwriting of others' work, as well as of cultural "Selfing and Othering" and worldmaking.

The *Mandeville*-author's most significant change to William's *Liber* is yet to come, of course, since that consists of the extension of the multi-purpose eastern tour into Marco Polo's Asia—the subject of my next four chapters. There are ways in which *The Book*'s representation of that newer old world transvalues its portrait of the biblical East, but my reading of the mandevillean multi-text reveals more continuities than breaks in its discursive, rhetorical, formal, thematic, and ideological elements and strategies. Just as the fascination with "choses estranges" and "customs, manners, and diversities" manifests itself, as we have seen, from the moment of departure (if not before, in the exordium's allusion to them), so the concern with religious matters persists from the moment that the pilgrim's guide becomes a marvelous gazetteer until Sir John concludes the whole work with a prayer. To be sure, the marvelous East contains fewer marks and memorabilia of the divine than does the biblical, but *The Book* notices some, and it reveals an almost undiminished interest in Christian reform and even expansion by depicting many non-Christians as models of devotion and giving them natural knowledge of the One, True God, in effect incorporating them into the fold of a vastly expanded, if also discontinuous and largely imagined proto-Christian community, a universal Christendom of simple faith and devout practice.

Earthly Symmetry and the Mirror of Marvelous Diversity in and Around Ynde

HAVING CAPPED ITS TOUR OF THE biblical East, as we saw in the previous chapter, with the long coda on Saracen beliefs, *The Book* returns once again to the instructive itinerary, announcing its intention to fulfill Sir John's initial promise in the Continental and Insular exordium by describing part of the diverse East beyond the Holy Land, a broadening of geographical focus that represents the *Mandeville*-author's principal innovation.¹ As this broadened focus has already been anticipated several times since the exordium, it is handled no differently from any previous shift in the text, being presented as a natural progression that entails only a minor change in subject, from territory and routes to territory and diversity (the themes advertised in Rustichello's prologue to Polo): "now it is time, if you like, to speak to you of the marches[,] of the isles, and diverse animals and diverse peoples beyond these marches" ("ore il est temps, si vous plest, de vous emparler des marches[,] des isles, et diuerses bestes et diuerses gentz en outre ces marches").²

Diversity there certainly is in the "isles" surveyed in *The Book*'s latter sections, and the Continental and Insular Versions give a foretaste of it in the short *mappamundi*-like geographical overview (a kind of inner exordium) that precedes the return to the itinerary, where, for example, Amazonia is mentioned and defined as "the land of Feminy, where there are no men but women only" ("la terre de Femynie, ou y ni ad nuls hommes qe femmes soulement"). After this transitional overview, the text sets out for the farther East exactly as it did for "la terre doutre mer," by addressing intending travelers, although its instructions were first being set down as changing conditions in Asia were making such Polo-esque journeys impossible: "Whoever would like to go then toward Tartary, toward Persia, toward Chaldea, and toward Ynde, should put to sea at Genoa or Venice . . ." ("Quy voroit donques aler vers

Tartaire, vers Persye, vers Caldec, et vers Ynde, il se mette en mer a Ianewe ou Venise . . .").³

This continuation of the text as traveler's guide is increasingly difficult to sustain, however, and the subsequent itinerary provides only the vaguest indications of the actual route. In part, the vagueness stems from the state of medieval knowledge about the earth east of the Holy Land, but its immediate cause is the nature of the *Mandeville*-author's template for the tour from Trebizond out: the Franciscan Odoric of Pordenone's *Relatio* (1330), used, like William's *Liber*, mostly in Jean le Long's slightly modified rendering, *Le chemin de la peregrinacion et du voyage* (1351). In the brief preamble to his dictated memoir, Odoric claims to have traveled "to the regions of the infidel . . . so that [he] might gain some fruit of souls" ("ad partes infidelium . . . ut fructus aliquos lucrificare[re] animarum")—"par le commandement du . . . Pape," in le Long's text—but it is uncertain whether this was the purpose of his fifteen-year journey through India, south-east Asia, and China. His professed motive apart, the friar's relation says little about Christian labors in the mission field, the main exception being a long set piece on the martyrdom of four Franciscans in India. Instead, as the preamble pledges, Odoric describes "mirabilia" that he has heard about or seen, laying out his Polo-esque material in the manner of William's *Liber*, along a first-person narrative of his itinerary, and sometimes revealing glimpses of himself—as, for instance, when he admits to having failed to convince a Chinese monk that human souls are not reincarnated in animals: "But I could have said so many things to him in this way, because he would never believe a thing" ("Sic autem isto modo dicere poteram sibi multa, quod nunquam aliud credere volebat").⁴

In overwriting Odoric's pious, marvelous, disorderly, and sometimes personal book—which in style and insight is inferior to both the *Liber* and the writings of his Franciscan predecessors in Asia, John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck—the *Mandeville*-author proceeds as before, except that he handles his underlying source with still greater freedom and no longer follows it step by step throughout. He again replaces the actual traveler moving in the past tense with a prospective traveler in the present tense, and works in enough new material (while discarding the martyrology) that his text is about twice as long as its template. He even writes Sir John into several of Odoric's experiences, something that he does only once with William's. Significantly, his reworking of the friar's swift passage through Trebizond into greater Armenia resembles a highly compressed version of the opening movement written over William's journey through Constantinople to the Palestine coast: Odoric's brief references to St. Athanasius and Noah's Ark, for example, become compelling anecdotes, the first about piety mistaken for heresy, the

latter about a monk's divinely-aided journey to recover a relic from the Ark, while his mention of Armenia between the religious references prompts a detour into Little Armenia for a striking legend about a "bele dame de Fayrie," an analogue of the Melusine legend that recalls the story of Hippocrates' daughter: "This is not the right way to go to the parts that I named above" ("Ceo nest mie la droit chemin pur aler as parties qe iay desuis nomez"), Sir John says at the legend's end, "but whoever would like to see these marvels can take it" ("mes qi vorroit veoir celles merueilles, il [le] purroit faire")—or in the Egerton Version's words, "he þat will see swilk meruailes, him behoues sum tyme þus wende oute of þe way."⁵ As this remark shows, the tale is meant, among other things, to signal the quasi-encyclopedic ambitions of the coming account.

In addition to remaking the *Relatio*'s opening passage so that it resembles the earlier journey into the pilgrim's East, the *Mandeville*-author rearranges its closing sections to his own purposes, rather as he extends William's itinerary with a survey of other routes to the Holy Land and the coda on the Saracens. Instead of Odoric's climactic passage through an infernal valley,⁶ which Sir John gets to make somewhat earlier in the text, *The Book*'s last sections offer a look from afar at the Earthly Paradise, a brief westward turn through some marvelous places near Prester John's Land, and an important comment on religious belief in the East. Questions of faith, clearly, remain prominent until the last, as do "choses estranges." The account of Paradise, moreover, whose riverine division of Asia is noticed in the map-like overview mentioned above, reveals the *Mandeville*-author theologizing Odoric's geography in the fashion of the circular *mappaemundi*, whose worldview he likewise recalls with a proof of Jerusalem's centrality in the account of "Lamory," or Sumatra—where it occurs in a detailed proof that the Jerusalem-centered earth (which has its spatial "beginning" in Paradise) is also a symmetrical sphere inhabited everywhere and potentially open to circumnavigation. Even more than in *The Book*'s survey of the biblical East, then, the author here enhances the dual and (from a modern standpoint) self-contradictory perspective inherited from both his underlying sources: that of the pious pilgrim along with the curious explorer.

In the present chapter, as in the next, I examine the most significant features of the multi-text that emerged from the *Mandeville*-author's at once bold and conservative overwriting of Odoric's relation, paying attention on occasion to the author's use of still other sources (a matter not discussed in the previous two chapters). My immediate subject, as the chapter title suggests, is the link between earthly symmetry and worldly diversity, and the consequences of this link for a reading of *The Book*'s marvels, especially in and around Ynde.

Conventional or even frivolous as some of the marvels (in)famously are, many others do more than distract or entertain: they provoke critical reflection, acting, I would argue, as variously corrective or speculative mirrors of human behavior and social organization, both actual and possible.

The passage that most strongly supports this reading is the Lamorian excursus on the earth's paradoxically asymmetrical symmetry, which places the portrait of the eastern world in a larger ideological framework, but the overt concerns of the excursus are already implicit in the brief transitional map. Like so much in the text, the excursus is an idiosyncratic, syncretic piece of writing set down with considerable rhetorical persuasiveness and moments of compelling artistry, and is all the more remarkable for being inspired by a passing comment in Odoric's *Relatio*. Not only does it once again reveal the *Mandeville*-author as a minor master of various small genres of writing—excluding part of the attempt at mathematical writing—the passage also shows the extent to which his wide-ranging and well-informed reading was pursued as if in response to E. M. Forster's injunction in *Howard's End*: "Only connect."

Very few of *The Book's* isotopes maintain the implicit specular reflections that, in my view, give the *Mandeville*-author's kaleidoscopic portrait of marvelous eastern diversity a sort of ideological coherence (which is not the same thing as unity). It may be that none of the translators and redactors saw this ideological shaping, although in the four versions (Cotton, Egerton, and, to a lesser degree, Defective, and Velser) that render the Lamorian excursus in its authorial form, an occasional detail reveals their makers slightly enhancing the critical mirrors. It is more likely, though, that *The Book's* intermediaries simply ignored whatever did not suit their own designs. The Metrical Version, for example, omits or obscures most of the crucial reflective passages, preferring purer and simpler marvels, but it interpolates two of its own that link different parts of the earth in a proto-nationalistic way: one details Stonehenge's Afro-Irish (!) origins, the other (mis)takes *The Book's* isle of "Pitan," where the people live on the scent of apples, for "Pikteine," and turns this Plinian race into English-speaking Picts descended from Hengest and Horn.⁷

As always, the widely circulated von Diemeringen and Vulgate Latin Versions are no less free with the text than the unique copy of the Metrical redaction. If the changes in the former version, however, tend to be like those in the English verse rendering, working mainly to enhance the marvelous as such, those in the Vulgate Latin have the opposite effect. The most striking examples of overwriting in this version come as the text passes beyond the Holy Land and as it digresses from Lamory into cosmography; thus, instead of the "orienting" *mappamundi*, the Latin redactor has Sir John offer a theo-

logical apology for wonders, and he scatters the excursus into several places, including Jerusalem, where he has Sir John use the earth's sphericity to argue against the holy city's centrality. In one instance, in von Diemeringen's and the Latin redactor's rendering of an "unnatural" natural marvel that is uniquely given theological significance in the authorial version, my topological reading touches on a subject that deserves separate study: the role in these two versions of Ogier the Dane, whose intermittent presence gives them a quite different feel. Ogier derives ultimately from the *Chanson de Roland*, but he enters these two texts through their common source, the Interpolated Continental (or Liège) Version, in which, as Sir John's bold precursor and God's wonder-worker in the East, he makes some two dozen appearances between Egypt and "Riboth" (Tibet?).⁸

Moving Beyond the Holy Land: A Preliminary "Orientation" and a Theological Apology for Wonders

In turning from the Saracen coda to the farther East, *The Book* prefaces its extended itinerary, as noted above, with a selective overview of the ethnopolitical geography of Asia and northern Africa that anticipates some of the coming diversities and serves as "a kind of vestibule [porche d'accès] into an Asia less well known than that of the pilgrimage lands." This vestibular geography begins by stating that the East beyond the Holy Land contains "many different countries and many large regions which are divided by the four rivers that come from the Earthly Paradise" ("multz de diuerses pais et multz des grandes regions, qi sont deuisees par les iiii. fluuies qi vieignent de Paradys terrestre"), and then proceeds to situate some of these countries in relation to the earth's major bodies of water (rivers, seas, and the Ocean Sea), before ending with a comment on "lower Libya, which begins at the Sea of Spain, where the Pillars of Hercules are. . . . In that land of Libya, if one turns toward the east, the shadow of his body is to the right; and in our countries the shadow [just as ours on this side] is to the left" ("Libie la basse, qui commence a la mer Despaigne, la ou les columpnes de Hercules sont. . . . En celle terre de Libie, si homme se tourne vers orient, lombre de son corps est a destre; et si en noz pais [si comme nous de ca] lombre est a sinistre").⁹

As these excerpts suggest, *The Book's* brief geographical overview works to orient the audience in several ways. The comments on the earth's "shadow play," for example, allude not only to the earth's spherical shape, but also to its mirror-like symmetry. This earthly symmetry is especially significant in that it likewise manifests itself in many descriptions of eastern customs and

manners, which often look like critical reflections of—and on—those of Latin Christendom. In addition, although the verbal map ranges in all four cardinal directions, it is clearly arranged along an east-west axis defined by the Earthly Paradise and the Pillars of Hercules. The Pillars are mentioned nowhere else in the text, but Paradise is often referred to, starting in Constantinople, and its presence here is another reminder that *The Book's* diverse eastern world is always understood as being under the sign of Christian History in the manner of the Ebstorf and Hereford world maps—which means that medieval audiences would have found its world comfortably traditional as well as challenging, instructive, or diverting.¹⁰

Apart from the Bodley, Metrical, and Vulgate Latin Versions, *The Book's* isotopes preserve the consoling theological geography implicit in the transitional overview, and one—the von Diemerungen Version—makes it more obvious. Whereas the Metrical Version rearranges and disperses the map to no obvious purpose and the Bodley and Latin redactions omit it altogether (the latter replacing it with an important passage articulating a theological apology for wonders), the other renderings do little more than draw clearer attention to the coming marvels, as in Sir John's mildly anxious remark in Velser's Version: "overseas there is many a thing that would be very hard to believe among ourselves, and yet it is surely true, as I tell you it" ("enthalt merß manig ding ist das man mag gar hart globen by uns, und ist doch sicher war, als ich úch es sag").¹¹

Like the other renderings (except the Vulgate Latin), the von Diemerungen Version betrays no such nervousness in looking ahead to the marvels of the East, but it stands apart from the other renderings in its manner of handling the geographical expansion; it makes the original fusion of the two different kinds of book appear virtually seamless while enhancing the "orienting" map's resemblance to the Christian topography of the *mappaemundi*. Instead of following the French versions in concluding its tour of the pilgrim's East with the Saracen coda, as do the other renderings (including the Vulgate Latin), this version displaces the coda to *The Book's* close. As a result, its map follows the supplementary Jerusalem itineraries sketched before the coda, and the text passes from the biblical to the marvelous East without pause. After the last alternative itinerary (the overland route through Tartary), the translator neatly adds another of his own—through France and Spain—so that the text can cross into North Africa and enter the geographical overview at the western Mediterranean: "one can put to sea . . . toward Valencia and enter the Spanish Sea . . . where Hercules placed . . . the pillars in [the place of] the sunset. . . . And then . . . one arrives in Libya" ("so mag [man] . . . adir widdere Valentz off das meer sytzen und komen in das Jspanier meer . . . da

Ercules . . . dy pyler gesatzt hat in der sonnen nedergange. . . . Und dabÿ . . . komet [man] in Lybien").¹²

Following its lengthy account of this distant region, and after explaining something that the *Mandeville*-author does not mention here (the earth's tripartite division), the von Diemeringen Version heads east. Unlike the author, then, his German redactor prefers *The Book's* unfolding to the vertical descent of the *mappamundi's* Christian History as a way of organizing the preliminary overview. Yet his overview cannot conclude in the farthest East, as his source concludes in the farthest West, since after reaching Paradise the German text has still to mention the countries divided by Paradise's four rivers. Had von Diemeringen simply followed his source here, the passage would have ended in the middle of nowhere, so to speak, in the strange land of Albania, where the people are unusually white and the dogs large enough to kill lions. Instead, he makes another unique move, heading briefly west to complete the map at the geographical center: "And when one is in the great sea, one can sail wherever one wants. One can sail toward Jerusalem, which of course lies in the middle of the world. And that Jerusalem lies in the middle of the world is made well known and verified by many writings" ("Und wan man in dem grossen mere [ist], so mag [man] siegeln, war man wil. [Man] mag geyn Jerusalem siegeln, das doch mitten in der werlde lyget. Und daz Jerusalem mitten in der werlde lyget, das wirdet mit vil schriffte wol bewÿsset und beweret").¹³

Von Diemeringen's overwritten rendering, however, hardly goes as far as that made by the Vulgate Latin redactor, who, like many of *The Book's* recent readers, regarded the text's movement farther east as breaking the bounds of the Jerusalem pilgrim's world. More anxious than even Velser about the credibility of the text that he was transmitting, he was also overtly concerned about its reception, and so replaced the entire "orienting" geography with a passage articulating a theology of wonder. Apart from praising God, the new matter is meant to ensure that *The Book's* diverse eastern world is seen in the proper (holy) light. In Hakluyt's edition, as in a late fifteenth-century printed text known to me (and so presumably in the Latin manuscripts), the redactor's addition is given a chapter of its own, which also serves to introduce a new "part" of the text (the second of three parts in Hakluyt's edition and of two in the earlier printing). As Hakluyt prints it, the chapter appears under a suggestive heading: "Persuasio ad non credentes terrarum diuersitates per orbem terrae," which can be rendered as "the case against those not believing the territorial diversities found throughout the earth's circle."¹⁴

This "persuasio" begins by making readers lift their gaze above the "orbis terrae," collapsing the boundary between secular and religious wonder, and asserting that God, his decision to create the world, and the created world

itself are all marvels: "Wonderful God created wonders through himself alone, so that he might be comprehended by his intelligent creatures, and through this be loved, and in this creator and creatures might delight in each other" ("Mirabilis Deus mirabilia [sic] propter semetipsum creavit, vt scilicet ab intellectualibus creaturis suis intelligeretur, & per hoc diligeretur, atque in hoc ipse creator, & creatura se mutuo fruerentur"). In making this claim, the redactor brings out one of *The Book's* implicit views, setting his Knight apart from William of Boldensele, who, as we saw, explains marvels naturally, in the fashion of Nicole Oresme (d. 1382) in *De causis mirabilium*, without "recourse to the heavens, the last refuge of the weak, or demons, or to our glorious God as if He would produce these effects directly."¹⁵

Having shifted the focus from earthly wonders alone by linking them with divine, the Vulgate Latin text proceeds to distinguish the two, setting terrestrial marvels below the heavenly, and making the marvel of their very diversity the cause of their lower ranking. At this point, the redactor unexpectedly stands his argument on its head, asserting that the earth's distracting, contrary diversity must be regarded in a spiritual frame of mind so that wonders will not produce the experience of wonder in those who behold them:

Ergo quicumque sapiens est non stupet animo, dum in terrenis respicit res varias . . . sed qui intellectum super sensum non eleuant, & magis credunt oculo suo corporeo, quam spiritali, & qui nunquam a natiuitatis sue loco recesserunt, isti vix volunt credere, seu possunt alijs vera narrantibus de mundi diuersitatibus.¹⁶

Therefore whoever is wise is not astounded in his soul, when in [different] lands he sees varied and diverse things . . . but those who do not raise the intellect above their sense, and believe more with the bodily eye than with the spiritual, and who have never left their birthplace, those persons scarcely want to or can believe the facts about the world's diversities recounted by others.

In this analysis, difference is recognized as a fact of life, a claim which the redactor attempts to establish more fully with an argument that no one should fail to understand—change of place typically brings one into contact with natural and cultural difference—and that also serves to make a more important point: the degree of difference is a function of distance. These claims are common ones, of course (they recall the von Diemerungen Version's exordium, for example), but they are obviously meant to increase the credibility of *The Book's* depiction of eastern wonders. The general case explicitly made, the text makes the particular one clear as well, and it does so with a device used several times throughout the whole: that of having the English Knight speak the Latin redactor's mind. In this instance, Sir John steps forward first

to assert that the coming account can be credited on the grounds that his description of the Holy Land can and will be confirmed by the many pilgrims who have been there, and next that he has extended his book beyond the pilgrim's East so as to give people a vicarious experience of divine wonders:

Vnde ego . . . procedam in describendo aliqua illorum, quae vidi & percepi in deambulatione mea, qua peragraui multas alias terras, & perlegi multas vndas, vsque in multorum hoc tempus annorum, & propter insipientes, & discredentes non tacebo. Sed nec propter credentes nec sapientes satis mouebor; tamen vt diuersa Dei opera qui respicere non possunt oculo, saltem legant, vel audiant ex hoc scripto. Pauca vtique vidi horum quae sunt, sed pauca horum quae vidi, narrabo.¹⁷

Wherefore I . . . shall continue to describe some of the things that I saw and learned in my wandering, wherein I passed through many other lands, and surveyed many seas, for many years up to this time, and I will not keep quiet on account of fools and disbelievers. Nor will I be sufficiently moved on account of believers or the wise; nevertheless, I write for this reason: so that those who cannot see God's diverse works with the eye, might at least read or hear [them]. I have no doubt seen few of those that exist, but I shall recount the few of them that I have seen.

A Symmetrical, Circumnavigable, and Everywhere-Habitable Jerusalem-Centered Sphere

The most consequential of the “few” wonders related in *The Book*, particularly in the authorial form of the multi-text, has to do with something noticed on “Lamory,” an island in the Ocean Sea beyond Ynde where the people practice nudism, cannibalism, and economic and sexual communism—although the crucial marvel is none of these things; it is a celestial phenomenon noted in passing in Odoric's *Relatio*: “there we lost sight of the tramontane [the North Star], for the earth took the sight away from us” (“là perdismes la veue de la transmontaigne, car la terre nous en tolli la veue”). In the *Mandeville*-author's hands, this aside becomes a typically depersonalized and augmented generalization that gives the friar's unexplained fact the status of a natural and regular occurrence:

En celle terre, nen plusours autres par de la, ne voit point homme lestelle transmontane, ceo est lastelle du mer qi ne se moet point, qi est vers byse. Mes homme veoit vne autre qi est al contrarie de celle, qi est vers mydy, qe homme appelle Antartike. Et si come ly maryners preignent auis icy et se gouernent par celle esteille vers byse, ensy fount ly mariners de la par celle esteille vers mydi, la quelle ne y piert poynt a nous, et ceste deuers byse napiert poynt a eux. . . .¹⁸

In that land, and in many others over there, one cannot see the tramontane star, that is the star of the sea which does not move, which is toward the north. But one sees another which is opposite to it, which is toward the south, that one calls Antarctic. And just as the sailors here take directions and guide themselves by that star to the north, so do the sailors over there by that star to the south, which does not appear to us, and that to the north does not appear to them. . . .

By the time the author leaves off augmenting Odoric's remark in this fashion, he has taken us on a long excursus about the earth's shape that fuses the worldviews of pilgrim and explorer and that has important implications for the interpretation of *The Book's* depiction of diversity. Specifically, the excursus asserts that the earth is a symmetrical sphere that can be circumnavigated, is habitable everywhere "above and below," and has Jerusalem located at the center of its upper surface.

According to one scholar in her lucid assessment of *The Book's* cosmography, the "dubious" idea of Jerusalem's centrality stands as the chief example of the *Mandeville*-author's "occasional lapses" from the scientific opinion of his day, such errors stemming from "either the pardonable forgetfulness of his early teaching by an elderly man, or alternatively a willingness to fall in with the common way of thinking lest what he wrote should be taken amiss"—or perhaps because "in a compilation, such as the *Travels* admittedly are in most parts, care had not been taken to edit or dovetail the excerpts."¹⁹

Yet poor memory, timid equivocation, or careless compilation seem hardly to be an adequate explanation for a theologizing claim made several times in *The Book*, and that occurs in a theoretical excursus spliced together from at least four sources: Macrobius's *Commentarium in somno Scipionis*, the *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum*, Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*, and Johannes de Sacrobosco's *De sphaera*. In contrast to Odoric and Polo, neither of whom is much given to reflecting on "choses estranges" (the *Divisament*, too, notices the pole star's disappearance only in passing), the *Mandeville*-author uses the celestial marvel to gather together a number of consequential ideas about the earth. If anything, as the following synopsis suggests, the "lapse" seems better explained as an attempt, at once conservative and innovative in the manner of *The Book* as a whole, to syncretize isolated "facts" and variant modes of thought:²⁰

- A) there are two fixed stars, the tramontane and the Antarctic, the former seen only here, the latter only over there;
- B) the earth and the sea are thus of round form;
- C) circumnavigation is possible, with ships and a willing crew;

- D) “the which thing I prove thus, according to what I have seen [tested]” with the astrolabe in both northern and southern regions (Europe, Libya, and Asia);
- E) “and if I had found company and ship to go farther beyond, I believe it to be certain that we would have seen all the roundness of the firmament. . . . and [even] so I have seen the three parts of all the roundness of the firmament and still another five and a half degrees”;
- F) those beneath the Antarctic star are “foot against foot” with (antipodal to) those beneath the tramontane, just like ourselves and those under us, for all parts of the earth and the sea have their habitable or passable opposites;
- G) Prester John’s lands, which are in the earth’s low part to the East, are under our lands, which are in the low part to the West, while Jerusalem is at the center (proved empirically and by citing Psalm 74: 11–12),²¹ so that those going there from the West require as many days climbing as they do in going from Jerusalem to the other limits of the earth’s surface over there, and those going beyond toward Ynde and the foreign isles encompass the earth’s and the sea’s roundness under our countries over here;
- H) “and therefore I have often recalled a thing I heard recounted when I was young”: how a brave man went around the earth without knowing it and turned back and so lost much effort;
- I) nor despite what simple people think will someone going under the earth fall off into the firmament, for above or below all believe that “they go more right than any other people” and “just as it seems to us that they are under us, so it seems to them that we are under them”;
- J) circumnavigation may be possible, but because of the earth’s size not one person in a thousand could find the right way except by chance or God’s grace;
- K) in the “oppinioun des anxienz sages,” the earth is 20,425 miles around, but to “mon petit sen . . . saue lour grace,” it is 31,500 miles (“the better to understand . . . let a figure be imagined where there is a large compass”);
- Lⁱ) [Insular Version] in the “oppinioun anxienz sages philosophes et astronomiens,” our country, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and Norway are not in the seven climates, because our parts are descending toward the West; [or]
- L^c) [Continental Version] let readers not be displeased that I have said that part of Ynde is under our country and that our country is under them, just as the far (“droit”) East is opposite to the far West, and the North to the South.²²

Such, then, is *The Book's* elaborate argument about the earth's shape, a rhetorical tour de force that reveals how an armchair geographer of moderate intellectual abilities could find in genuine travel writings and contemporary geographical theory the possibility of a real—not a fantastic—journey around the earth. It is thus an argument that makes it easy to see why medieval audiences, in the familiar scholarly topos, should have been unable to “discriminate between Polo's eyewitness accounts and Mandeville's lying wonders.” For not only does the passage make memorable use of the *Mandeville*-author's characteristic mode of demonstration by imaginative persuasion—“narratione exemplorum” (by telling exemplary stories), as it might be called—it also makes subtle use of the three types of proof from dialectic: “ratione” (by reasoning), “experientia” (by experiment), and “auctoribus” (by citing authorities). And reinforcing these is the studied display of measurements and calculations that is highly unusual in medieval geographical and travel writing—suggesting that the author was making persuasive use of the fourteenth-century “habit of quantifying,” a development in natural philosophy that penetrated virtually every area of medieval thought, including theology.²³

The two sections (D and E) where Sir John makes his notable appearance as explorer, for example, must have been especially persuasive. Carefully dovetailed, they fall into four smaller parts defined by their main concerns: tramontane (practical); tramontane and Antarctic (theoretical); Antarctic (practical); tramontane and Antarctic (practical and theoretical). In the first part, Sir John offers his measurements of the tramontane, while in the second he expands the earlier explanation of the relation between the pole stars; in the third, he offers his measurements of the Antarctic star, while in the fourth he expands the earlier claim about circumnavigation, applying it to himself as well, and showing exactly how much of “la reondesse de firmament” he has seen.

This partly recursive organization is effective in itself, but it is reinforced here by an efficacious rhetorical strategy: like *The Book* as whole, the “proof” starts from what is relatively familiar and credible and then builds toward what is foreign and generally harder to credit, using the former to authenticate the latter. Thus, Sir John's astrolabe measurements are given for foreign sites only after those for European ones: “toward the region of Brabant . . . the tramontane is 53 degrees in height, and farther forward in Germany and Bohemia [in Germany toward Rome] it is at 58 degrees, and further forward toward the northern regions it has 62 degrees in height and several minutes, for I myself have measured it with the astrolabe” (“vers les parties de Brabant . . . la transmontane est liiii. degrez de haut, et plus auant en Almaine et Boeme [en Almaine vers Rome (sic)] elle est a lviii. degrez, et plus auant vers les parties septentrionels elle ad lxii. degrez de haut et ascuns menues, qar ico mesmes lay mesure al astrolabe”).²⁴

To a modern reader, this proof is no more convincing than most of the *Mandeville*-author's cosmographical arguments. As a glance at any map oriented toward the north and based on a mathematical projection of curved onto planar space reveals, Sir John's first two measurements are upside down. Bohemia, after all (like "Germany toward Rome" in the 1371 manuscript), lies to the south of Brabant, the fourteenth-century duchy roughly centered on Brussels. In the present context, though, the question is how medieval readers might have regarded the proof. The simple answer is that they would likely have found it convincing. Most of them would not have had the knowledge or the expensive tools necessary to verify the English Knight's figures, which, as Roman numerals copied by hand, were in any case always subject to mutation. The knowledge required to check or judge the accuracy of these numbers was not especially complicated, but it was at the time a quite specialized possession, as we can see from two details of textual history: in transmitting the later and fairly simple proof that the earth measures 31,500 miles around ("let there be imagined a figure"), the Egerton redactor, as his editor notes, "makes a mess of it altogether," a fact that points to his unfamiliarity with the material, while the variant reading of the 1371 manuscript quoted above ("en Alemaigne vers Rome") reveals that the scribe Raoulet d'Orléans was not even remotely following the sense of his text as he worked.²⁵ For such readers as these, then, we can probably assume that the English Knight's numbers were authoritative in and of themselves.

But what of those readers with some cosmographical knowledge? Several sorts of evidence suggest that they would have found Sir John's measurements plausible, even perhaps in their "upsidedownness." For a start, the measurement given for Brabant is roughly accurate (could this locate the *Mandeville*-author for us?) since on a modern map the region is situated between about 51° 50" and 52° 50" north; and "the latitude of eny place in a regioun," according to a fourteenth-century treatise on the astrolabe, "is verely the space bytwix the cenyth [zenith] of hem that dwellen there and the equinoxiall cercele [equator]. . . . And thilke space is as much as the pool arlike is high in that same place fro the orisonte."²⁶ In addition, some medieval readers may well have imagined Germany and Bohemia to lie to the north of Brabant, as the *Mandeville*-author appears to do; for if this particular error is not simply a consequence of the author's sometimes uncertain grasp of geography, it could have resulted from his having approximated the second and third measurements with the aid of a circular *mappamundi*. On the Ebstorf and Hereford maps, for instance, both of which depict Europe as something like a quadrant, the named sites lie in roughly the south-to-north order that the *Mandeville*-author gives them.²⁷

One way or another, then, it appears likely that Sir John's European measurements of the tramontane's height would have been accepted by *The Book's* early audiences. If so, this would have left them unable to question the figures still to be offered. Compared to those provided for the northern hemisphere, in fact, the figures given for the southern look quite modest (18 degrees in "Libya" and some 33 degrees near Lamory), not only because the fixed polar stars "divide the firmament into two equal parts, such that there is as much below as above" ("partent le firmament en deux parties ygaulez, si qe tant y a par dessouz come par dessure"), but also because medieval geography knew nothing of the unequal distribution of land between these two hemispheres.²⁸ And this modesty in the south would have enhanced Sir John's boast, made after his claim that he could have circumnavigated the earth, to have seen three-quarters of the firmament.

Somewhat less striking but more significant than Sir John's activities as an explorer is the insistence in the excursus on the earth's symmetry, since this emphasis brings to light the basis of *The Book's* view of the world. Considered, for example, from the perspective of the history of geography, the insistence shows that the author has fully grasped the implications of "the mathematical as opposed to the popular idea of the globe," an understanding that allows him to speculate intelligently about the nature of the earth as a whole.²⁹ Considered, though, from the perspective of rhetorical and ideological criticism, the emphasis on symmetry suggests how we can understand *The Book's* portrait of the eastern world. Since symmetry entails difference and likeness at the same time (as when the two fixed stars are located opposite each other), and since the *Mandeville*-author extends its application from the earth as such to the world, or the earth's human inhabitants (as when everyone thinks that they "go more right" ["vont plus droit"] than any other peoples), it is hard not to construe the recurring allusions to symmetry as applicable to the entire account of the East.

We can, that is, read *The Book's* depictions of cultural and religious diversity as so many small mirrors in which "over there" ("par de la") at once differs from and resembles "over here" ("par de cea"), and consequently both reflects and reflects critically on Latin Christendom. Since this is how some portraits are in fact presented in the Continental and Insular Versions (and those that follow them in this respect, especially the Cotton and Egerton renderings), *The Book* seems to be making an implicit case for the unity underlying the world's marvelous diversity: hence the easy delight in the "choses estranges" first seen in Constantinople and then found everywhere by the author.

Two brief passages strongly support this generalized reading of the excursus. The first, which is not in Odoric's itinerary, has to do with the human

plenitude on the five thousand habitable “isles” “en Ynde et enuiron Ynde,” a geographical *copia* that only the *Catalan Atlas* among medieval maps tries to suggest pictorially.³⁰ Explaining the large local populations by the fact that the “Yndois” are naturally unmoving because they are in the climate of slow-moving Saturn, the text notes that “*in our country it is quite the opposite*. For we are in the seventh climate, which is of the moon. . . . And therefore it gives us the nature and will to move easily and to journey by diverse ways and to look for strange things and diversities of the world” (“*en nostre pais est tot a contraire*. Qar nous sumes en septisme climac, qest de la lune. . . . Et pur ceo elle nous donne nature et voluntee de mouoir legierement et de chemyner par diuerses voies et de sercher choses estranges et diuersitees du monde”).³¹

Supported here by a version of climate theory, the idea that East and West exist in a specular relation to each other, as it were, later receives support from a natural wonder borrowed from Odoric, the vegetable lamb of “Caldihle,” whose reality the friar proves by recalling a familiar western marvel: “Many people do not want to believe this, and nonetheless it is as possible and credible as the birds which grow on trees in Ireland” (“Pluseurs gens ne le veulent croire, et non pour quant est ce aussi bien possible et créable comme des oes qui en Yrlande croissant des arbres”). Presenting the eastern marvel as entirely natural (“and it is a great work of nature”; “et si est grant oure de nature”), the *Mandeville*-author makes a crucial change to Odoric’s authenticating assertion, having Sir John address the local people with the claim, obviously meant for *The Book*’s audience, that the earth’s western ends should be seen to be as marvelous as its eastern, each mirroring the other. The point of the assertion, moreover, is not simply to suggest that “we” too have wonders, but to show that “they” respond to them as “we” do, pointing up the similarity underlying difference: “Nevertheless I told them that I considered it no very great marvel, for there were also trees in our country that bear fruit which become flying birds. . . . And they were greatly astonished by this” (“Nient pur tant ieo lour dis qe ieo ne le tenoie mie a molt grant merueille, qar auxi bien y auoit il arbres en nostre pais, qi portent fruit qi deuient oisealx voillantz. . . . Et de ceo se meruailent il fortment”).³²

In this and the earlier “Yndian” passage, then, as in the theoretical excursus, the implication is that no earthly place can stand apart, since each has its (presumably equal) opposite. Paradoxically, however, the excursus and a later passage make it clear that two places do stand apart: Jerusalem, the chosen site of God’s world-transforming intervention into History, which lies at the center and summit; and the Earthly Paradise, which, as the later passage’s fusion of scientific and theological geography reveals, is truly a place apart, unreachable even by the Flood and lying “eastwards toward the earth’s *begin-*

ning. But that is not our east over here . . . where the sun rises to us; for when the sun is east toward those regions of Paradise, it is then midnight in our regions over here because of the earth's roundness, on which I touched earlier" ("vers orient al commencement de la terre. Mes ceo nest mie nostre orient de cea . . . ou le soleyl leue a nous; qar, quant ly solail est orient vers celles parties de Paradis, il est adonques my nuyt en nostres parties de cea pur la roundesse de la terre, de quoy iay autrefoitz touche").³³

The Book's symmetrically spherical earth, that is, has a fundamental asymmetry in the form of both a center and a beginning, the privileged places of the earth's Christian topography; and if the latter is unreachable, the former is just the opposite: whatever the practical obstacles to circumnavigation, all roads in effect lead *up* to Jerusalem—a point that cannot be overstressed, given the recent critical claim that *The Book* in its later sections turns away from a Jerusalem-centered world.³⁴ In fact, as the cosmographical excursus demonstrates, and as both the description of Paradise and scattered passages on some eastern peoples' knowledge of the Bible and the True Faith confirm, *The Book's* marvelous East clearly lies within the distant space of Christian History defined by Jerusalem and Paradise, such that, even with the addition of Cathay, the region in outline resembles the contained Asia of the Ebstorf and Hereford *mappaemundi*.

Symmetry Ignored, Circumnavigation Scuttled, and Jerusalem Decentered

Despite the significance of the cosmographical excursus to *The Book's* portrait of the world, it was rarely translated in its entirety, making the "specular" reading advanced above hard or even impossible to extend to certain isotopes. Insofar as one can judge, the altered forms of the passage are a consequence not of certain translators' failure to grasp the *Mandeville*-author's arguments, but of their having their own designs on the text.

Of the three Continental redactions discussed in the present study, only Velser's contains the excursus in something like the authorial form, and even then his translation reduces it by about a third, omitting the last four parts (I–L^c) entirely, and adapting the first eight, such that it ends not with a theoretical argument about the earth's shape, but with the persuasive anecdote about the man who unwittingly sailed around the world, remaking the *Mandeville*-author's "vaillant homme" as "an honorable man" ("ainen erbern man").³⁵ In contrast, von Diemeringen's text compresses the whole thing to two quite different elements (the initial discussion of the polar stars and the proof of Jerusa-

lem's centrality), rewriting the second in its own way, while also undoing the argument for inverse symmetry in the introduction to Ynde.³⁶ Omitting both the latter argument and the mention of the barnacle geese, the Vulgate Latin Version likewise reduces the excursus, but does so in a different way, shrinking it to an adapted selection of Sir John's measurements and calculations, omitting all reference to circumnavigation and inhabited antipodes, and displacing the remarks on Jersualem to the city itself, where the fact of the earth's sphericity is used to *disprove* the claim that Jerusalem is geographically central.

Among the Insular renderings the situation is no more favorable to the transmission of the entire cosmographical argument. Neither the Bodley nor the Metrical Version retains the excursus in any form, omitting even the anecdote about circumnavigation, and both excise the two symmetry-confirming passages (on Yndian immobility and the barnacle geese).³⁷ In addition, twenty-eight of the Defective Version's some thirty-eight manuscripts likewise lack the excursus, although its absence in this case may be due to a faulty exemplar.³⁸ Only the Cotton and Egerton Versions transmit the passage entire, and of these the Cotton alone offers a literal translation of the French text (later, though, it adds a sentence making Sir John taste the vegetable lamb). In contrast, the Egerton rendering contains its characteristic small changes that enhance the prose and clarify the sense: where, for example, Sir John suggests that if he had found company and shipping, "we would have seen all the roundness of the firmament all around" ("nous eussions veuz tote la reondesse de firmament tot entour"), the redactor omits the last two words and glosses the preceding phrase: "we schuld hafe sene all þe roundeness of þe firmament, þat es to say bathe þe emisperies, þe vppermare and þe nedermare."³⁹

If the Egerton Version's changes point to a redactor who understood his source here, those in Velser's Version reveal someone who had difficulty with his material, starting with the name of the pole star (the French word reveals the poor state of his exemplar): "For I do not know what it is called in German; in Latin it is called Polus Articus, in French it is called Tromatana" ("Den weiß ich nit wie er in tůtsch haisset; in lattin haisset er Polus Articus, in welsche haisset er Tromatana"). Indeed, this redaction takes much longer than its Continental source to explain that there are two fixed stars, and neglects to conclude from the explanation that the earth is a sphere, even though it makes the case for circumnavigation. One notable detail suggests that Velser viewed the earth according to the scheme of the circular *mappaemundi*, since he defines the cardinal points with implicit reference to an east-oriented map: "The [Arctic Pole] stands in the north, that is between east and west *upon the left hand*" ("Der [Polus Articus] statt in septentrion, daz ist zwůschent orient und occident *uff der lincken hand*").⁴⁰

If Velser was thinking of maps, von Diemeringen was thinking of the actual night sky in the first of the two parts that he kept of the excursus, referring there to the vanishing of “the bear and other stars” (“ursus [sic] und ander gestyrne”) as well as the Pole Star. Yet even though von Diemeringen had looked at the night sky, he seems not to have understood the text, since his version neglects to say that Lamory is so far *south* that the northern constellations disappear. In addition, after naming the “polus [ant]articus,” his version draws a unique and unwarranted conclusion from it: “And therefore it is true that Jerusalem lies at the center of the world, because as far as the Netherlands are from Jerusalem, . . . as far also this land [Lamory] lies from Jerusalem. And this is all the occident, that is the [place of] sunset. And Ynde is toward the sunrise. And thus is Jerusalem in the middle of the world” (“Und darumb ist iss war, das Jerusalem mitten in der werlde lyget, want also verre nederlant ist von Jerusalem, . . . als verre lyt auch dyt lant von Jerusalem. Und dyt ist allis occident, daz ist der sonnen nedergang. Und Jndien ist gein der sonnen offgang. Und also ist Jerusalem mitten in der werlde”).⁴¹

In contrast to von Diemeringen’s compression of the excursus to an argument for Jerusalem’s centrality stands the Vulgate Latin redactor’s reduction, reworking, and redistribution of the passage’s elements, the most striking part of which is the resistance to the theologized geography. Of the long excursus in its original location, the Latin preserves only a trace: “The Antarctic pole is visible here at a good altitude, and it just begins to appear in upper Lybia, such that in upper Ethiopia it is elevated by 18 degrees, as I myself have tested with the astrolabe” (“Hic apparet in bona altitudine polus Antarcticus, & incipit modo apparere in alta Lybia, ita quod in alta Æthiopia eleuatur octodecim gradibus, prout ipse probauit Astrolabio”). Sir John’s other measurements are displaced to the end of the survey of the isles around Ynde, where, conflated with the likewise displaced account of the earth’s size, they provide a local and authenticating conclusion before the text turns toward Mancy and Cathay. The redactor makes several changes to the moved account, among them placing the European measurements closer to the Knight’s birthplace (England and Scotland) and curtailing his travels from the original three-quarters of the earth: “From this [set of measurements] it is evident that with respect to the breadth of the sky from pole to pole, *my journey was through a quarter of the limits of the earth’s sphere* and more, by 5 degrees and 20 minutes” (“Ex quo patet respiciendo ad latitudinem coeli, quae est de polo ad polum, quod *itineratio mea fuit per quartum Horizontis sphaerae terrae* & ultra, per quinque gradus, cum 20. minutis”).⁴²

Clearly, the Latin redactor thought that only a small part of the spherical earth could be traversed, and it is hardly surprising that he omits all mention of circumnavigation. Yet if he appears here to be a more conservative geo-

graphical thinker than the *Mandeville*-author, he does the opposite in Jerusalem, interpolating an argument, based partly on the excursus, against *The Book's* Christian topography that shows him treating his source as a reference book: "what certain people make known or at least suppose—that Judea or even Jerusalem, or this Church stands at the center of the whole world, according to the aforesaid scripture (in medio terrae)—*cannot be understood spatially according to the measure of the earth's body*" ("quod quidam peruulgauerunt, aut opinati sunt, Iudaeam aut Ierusalem, vel Ecclesiam istam consistere in medio totius mundi, propter praedictam scripturam, (in medio terrae) hoc *intelligi non potest localiter ad mensuram corporis terrae*").⁴³

What follows this modern-sounding claim is a long cosmographical argument mainly concerned with interpretations of the Psalmist's phrase "in medio terrae" (Ps. 74: 11–12). The redactor offers several possible readings of the phrase, the last of them spiritual: "about which view," the text says, "nothing should be written at present" ("de quo intuitu nihil ad praesens est scribendum"). This closing gesture apart, the argument comes from geography, and the redactor has Sir John argue that Judea would have to be situated on the equator to be central. Accordingly, the text settles for a broad, almost common-sensical interpretation of the Psalmist's phrase, and Sir John steps forward with the requisite proof in a passage that reveals how complex *The Book's* reception can be—who could have guessed that the always orthodox Vulgate Latin redactor would offer such resistance to the much more broad-minded *Mandeville*-author's theological geography?

Mihi autem videtur, quod praefata Prophetæ scriptura, potest exponi, in medio terrae, id est, *circa medium nostri habitabilis*, videlicet ut Iudaea sit circa medium inter Paradisum & Antipodes Paradisi, distans tantum ab ipso Paradiso in oriente 96. gradibus, *prout ego ipse per viam orientalem tentavi*: quanquam de hoc non videtur de facili plena certitudo haberi, eo quod in longitudine coeli nullae stellae manent immobiles, sicut in latitudine manent poli semper fixi.⁴⁴

To me moreover it seems that the Prophet's writing mentioned before can be explained: "in medio terrae," that is, *around the middle of our habitable region*, namely as Judea is around the midpoint between Paradise and the Antipodes of Paradise, being distant only 96 degrees from Paradise in the east, *as I myself have tested by the eastern route*: although from this it does not appear that complete certainty is to be easily had, since no stars remain immobile in the length of the sky as the pole stars always do in the breadth.

Reflective Speculations in a Gallery of Marvelous Mirrors

Measuring the stars is of course not the only thing that the *Mandeville*-author has Sir John do on his textual travels in the East; like Odoric, Sir John is also gathering “mirabilia,” or “diversites” and “choses estranges” as *The Book* calls them. Indeed, between the text’s initial stop in Constantinople, with its globe-dropping statue, and the final passage through the Cathayan realm of the rich man attended by fifty virgins, there is hardly a place without wonders, including Latin Christendom, as the anecdote about the barnacle geese reveals. On *The Book*’s spherical earth no location has a monopoly on the marvelous, not even Ynde, the preferred site of foreign strangeness since antiquity; in Pliny’s words, “especially India and the regions of the Ethiopians teem [scatent] with wonders.” Ethiopia’s importance diminished in the medieval period (it makes only a minor appearance in *The Book*), but India’s continued to increase, as in Polo’s *Divisament*, where the region’s nature is summed up in this rubric: “Here begins the book of Indie and it will describe all the marvels that are there and the kinds of people.” Similarly, in Friar Jordanus of Séverac’s *Mirabilia descripta* (c. 1330), India is twice called “another world,” where “every thing indeed is a marvel.”⁴⁵

Yet if the *Mandeville*-author demonstrates his characteristic independence, as well as an admirable largesse, in distributing marvels throughout the circle of lands, he also pays his respects to tradition by concentrating many of the most remarkable and best known in and around Ynde.⁴⁶ Scholars making passing reference to *The Book* often suggest that these traditional marvels are its defining feature, sometimes calling the author a “marvel-monger,” and such claims do capture a partial truth about both text and compiler.⁴⁷

At the same time, though, these passing claims necessarily overlook the context and rhetorical presentation of the wonders, which, as I argued with reference to Justinian’s statue, can make them more than conventional or frivolous. The most apropos example here of the *Mandeville*-author’s easy-to-overlook subtlety in handling traditional marvels occurs in the famous list of ten Plinian races that in effect closes the text’s passage through Ynde and its isles, a list interpolated precisely where Odoric refuses to describe any further “mirabilia,” but insists instead on his veracity: “There are many other kinds of marvels on that isle such that no one would really believe them if they did not see them. For everywhere there one can find so many marvels. But I have seen there with my own eyes what I have written” (“Pluseurs autres manières de merveilles sont de ceste isle [Dondiin] que nulz a peine vouldroit croire se il ne les veist. Car en tout le monde la on puist trouver tant de merveilles. Mais je y vis a mes yeulx ce que je escrips”). Overwriting the friar’s authenticating

refusal, and making no reference to the issue of credibility, the *Mandeville*-author offers up this sort of thing:

Et en vne autre [ylle] y a gentz qi sont homme et femme [ensemble] et ont nature del vne et del autre, et ont vne mamelle a vn coustee et al autre nont point. Et ont membres de generacioun de homme et de femme et vsent de quel qil veullent, vne foi the dun et autrefoitz dautre; et engendrent enfantz, quant ils [font] oures de madle, et, quant ils [font] oures de femele, ils conceyuent et portent enfantz.⁴⁸

And on another [isle] there are people who are man and woman [together] and have the nature of one and the other, and they have one breast on one side and on the other none at all. And they have members of generation of man and of woman and they use whichever they want, one time one and another time the other; and they beget children when they [do] male work, and when they [do] female work, they conceive and bear children.

In its conciseness and form, the list from which this excerpt comes recalls the monstrous portrait gallery on Africa's southern edge on the Ebstorf, Hereford, and Psalter maps. Yet it differs from these pictorial surveys in at least two crucial ways. First, *The Book's* roster of monsters is far less prominent, and hence less obviously important, in its larger textual context than the galleries are in their cartographic one, where their presence suggests that even such creatures as these are capable of Christian salvation.⁴⁹ In addition, the *Mandeville*-author's list gives slightly more information about the peoples than do the galleries, in part because it has to convey in words what the maps can express with images alone. To the self-explanatory picture of the Hermaphrodites, for instance, the Hereford map adds only the most laconic gloss: "A people of both sexes unnatural in many ways" ("Gens uterque sexus innaturales multimodis modis").⁵⁰

But *The Book* gives more information also because the *Mandeville*-author takes an almost ethnographic interest in his material even while apparently pandering to a taste for the bizarre. Unlike the mapmakers, who are concerned simply to establish the existence of outlandish peoples, he notices "customs, manners, and diversities" together, to recall the apology made after the visit to Constantinople. Thus, the man-woman people is defined not only by appearance, but also by a characteristic form of behavior. This as it were proto-ethnographic curiosity—which is really a kind of "theoretical curiosity"—manifests itself still more clearly in *The Book's* somewhat fuller depictions of other remarkable peoples, whose diverse social and religious customs receive considerable attention, as though the author wanted to explore the boundary between the imaginary and the real in his culture, as well as that between the possible and the actual.⁵¹

If so, then, as suggested earlier, some ethnographic depictions can be read as mirrors of and for the Latin Christian world. The portraits of two marvelous peoples (both of good classical ancestry) can be taken as exemplary in this respect, as can the account of the only natural marvel in *The Book* to be given a theological significance. The two peoples are the Amazons, whose territory is added to Odoric's account beyond Chaldea en route to Ynde, and the "Canophales," or dog-headed race, of the isle of "Nacumera," while the marvel has to do with the annual arrival of fish on the isle of "Calonak." In the third example, we see royal obedience to a divine injunction being amply, if mysteriously, rewarded, while in the first two, which are almost idealized portraits of a secular and a religious society respectively, we see the communal harmony that can result from firm obedience to properly elected authority, qualities that the exordium suggests are absent in the divided world of its audience.

What interests the *Mandeville*-author about Amazonia, for example, is not so much its lack of men as the at once monastic and feudal way in which the all-female realm itself is organized. The text relates, for instance, that the Amazons engage in sexual relations with men for only a few days once a year for procreative purposes, leaving their territory to do so, and that social and military class are marked by the breast (left or right) that a woman has removed to allow her physical freedom as a warrior. Even more important, "In that land there is a queen who governs the entire country, and all are obedient to her. And they always establish the queen by election of the one who is bravest in arms. They are good warrioresses and prudent, wise and brave; and they often go as a troop to the aid of other kings in order to earn money, and they uphold themselves most forcefully" ("En cest terre y a vne roigne, qi gouverne tot le pais, et totes sunt obeisantz a luy. Et totdys font roigne par elleccioun de celle qi est plus vaillante en armes. Elles sont bones guerrieresses et pruez, sages et vaillantez; et vont bien souent en soudes al aide des autres rois pur argent gayner, et se mainteignent mult vigourosement").⁵² Despite its manlessness, then, "la terre de Femynie" looks very much like a model secular society in a world where war was considered a heroic necessity: disciplined, practical, hierarchical, monarchical, meritocratic, and democratic, Amazonia is almost everything that the exordium says Christendom was not. Certainly, the warring and plague-depopulated France and England, in which *The Book* first circulated and where, according to the exordium, the quarreling "seignurs terriens" failed to lead a willing commons to retake the kingdom of Jerusalem, must have seemed utterly anarchic in the reflected light of this female realm, which could have mustered the required troops.

The critical contrast between "them" and "us" is not made explicitly, of course, and the proto-utopian nature of Amazonia is signalled most clearly by its Paradise-like disposition: "it is an isle entirely surrounded by water, ex-

cept in two places, where there are two entries" ("ceo est vne isle tot enuironne deawe, forsqe en ii. lieux, ou il y a ii. entreez"). Yet, given that the text has gone scarcely ten printed pages since the Sultan reproached Sir John about "lestat des Cristiens" and its negative territorial consequences, more than a few members of the audience must have felt themselves gazing here into a critical mirror. Fortunately for them, the image contains a disabling flaw: the origins of Amazonia in self-inflicted violence. After the death of King "Colopeus" and "all the noble blood of his realm" ("tot le bon sang de son roialme") in a war with Scythia, the queen and "les autres nobles dames" slaughtered the remaining men, so that all women would then be widows. This is hardly the holy violence begotten in imitating Christ or expelling the "mescreantz" from the Holy Land, which means that *The Book's* portrait of Amazonia cannot be a universal paradigm, as Prester John's Christian kingdom alone perhaps is, but a model showing what even a faithless and manless society can achieve.

Unlike Amazonia, the "Nacumeran" society of the "Canophales" has both faith and men, and so stands as a more likely model for *The Book's* earliest audiences. Also unlike the Amazons, this still more marvelous domain comes from Odoric's *Relatio*, where the islanders appear as a dog-faced people ("Les gens y ont visaige de chien"), who worship the ox, wear little clothing, and are excellent warriors (though they eat their battle-dead). Keeping these details and sometimes following Odoric's neutral Latin rather than le Long's pointed French—which renders a people "large of body and very strong in battle" ("magni corpore et valde fortes in bello") as "all black and very cruel in battle," "tous noirs et . . . tres cruelle . . . en bataille"—the *Mandeville*-author makes two important changes: he recalls the race's classical name and notes that "they are most rational people and of good understanding" ("sont gentz mult resonables et de bon entendement").⁵³

More significant than these changes, however, are those that the author makes to the depiction of the people's king, whose wealth and piety Odoric mentions. Fleshed out from the friar's sketch, *The Book's* adapted king looks a model ruler in the manner of the Amazonian queen, but with one crucial difference: if bravery is her chief qualification, faith and justice are his, the implication being that a pious ruler is necessarily just, whatever his professed faith. In this case the faith is clearly monotheistic, and the king reveals his great devotion in an almost Christian fashion:⁵⁴

Relatio. Li roys de ce pays porte a son col une rengé de grosses perles ainsi que sont cy unes patenostres d'ambre et par ces perles il compte ses oraisons, car il

The Book. Ly roi de celle isle est mult riche et mult puissant et *mult deuout selonc sa loy*; et ad entour son col ccc. perles d'orient bien grosses et nodelz en guise de

fait chascuns jours à *ses dieux* plus de trois cens oroisons.

Paternostres daumbre. Et en la manere que nous disons *Pater noster* et *Aue Maria* en comptant les paternostres, ensi cis roi dit chescun iour *deuouement* ccc. prieres a son dieu auant qil mange.

The king of this country carries round his neck a necklace of pearls as large as some amber prayer beads are here and with these pearls he says his prayers, for every day he makes more than 300 prayers to his gods.

The king of this isle is very rich and very powerful and *very devout according to his law*; and he has around his neck 300 quite large orient pearls knotted in the fashion of amber prayer beads. And in the way that we say *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* in counting our beads, so this king every day *devoutly* says 300 prayers to his god before he eats.

Alongside the symbol of his devotion, the king carries around his neck the sign of his power: a large ruby. Borrowing it from Odoric, who places it in the king's hand instead of a scepter, the *Mandeville*-author fuses this significantly displaced ruby with one held by the King of Ceylon in Hayton's *Flor des estoires*. In so doing, he makes several subtle changes to his secondary source, such that the ruby becomes a symbol of fealty to the king, whose obedient subjects symbolically lead their chosen overlord at election time:⁵⁵

Flor. [Q]uant le roy de celle yse doit estre couronné on li donne en la main un rubin. Et puis monte a cheval et chevauche par toute la ville tenant ces rubis en sa main. Et des celle heure en avant tous lui obeissent et le tiennent a roy et a seigneur.

The Book. [Q]uant ils eslisent lour roi, ils luy baillent celle rubie a porter en sa main; et ensi le mesnont chiualchant tot entour la citee, et de lors en auant ils sont totes obeisantz a luy.

When the king of that isle must be crowned they put the ruby in his hand. And then he mounts a horse and rides through the entire town holding the ruby in his hand. And from this hour on all obey him and take him as king and lord.

When they choose their king, they place this ruby for him to carry in his hand; and thus they lead him riding all around the city, and from then on they are completely obedient to him.

As in Amazonia, only more so, such loyalty is depicted as justly motivated rather than thoughtlessly automatic, a point made with a remarkable claim got from neither Odoric nor Hayton, which reminds the audience that righteous justice works in part through the fear it provokes: "This king is very

righteous according to his law and a very good defender of the law; wherefore one can go safely through the whole country and carry everything one wants, since none is so bold as to rob anyone, for the king immediately has justice done to him" ("Cis roi est mult droiturels solonc sa loy et mult bon iusticiers; pur quoi homme poet aler seurement par tot son pais et porter tot ceo qe lem voet, qe nul nest si hardy de nully desrobber, qar tantost ly roi en ferroit faire iustice"). Such a claim certainly could not have been made about fourteenth-century Christendom.⁵⁶

Just as obedience to one's king is shown here to lead to a social harmony that must have seemed highly appealing to *The Book's* earliest audiences, so royal obedience to God is elsewhere depicted as producing communal rewards of a sort that would have resonated favorably after the Black Death of 1348 and its minor recurrences. This passage is found about a page previously in the tour of the isles around Ynde and concerns a natural marvel adapted from Odoric. According to the friar, who (like Polo in his account of a similar marvel in Georgia) may be giving a confused description of spawning, all the fish in the sea come once a year to "Campe" (the ancient realm of Champa) and remain ashore for three days, one species after the other: "And if one asks those of the country why it [each species] comes and climbs [ashore], they say that the fishes come to show reverence to the king of that country" ("Et quant on demande à ceulx du pays dont ce [chascune espece] vient et que ce monte [à la rive], ilz dient que ces poissons viennent faire reverence au roy de ce pays").⁵⁷

The Book's account of this marvel follows Odoric's very closely, adding two details whose relevance is clarified by the larger passage's conclusion: that the marvel occurs nowhere else in the world, and that the fishes beach themselves "in an orderly manner" ("ordeignement"). The crucial difference between the two accounts in the present context, though, comes with the closing question; this the *Mandeville*-author renders as an enquiry into the cause and meaning of the marvel, which by being "entirely against nature . . . cannot be without great significance" ("tot contre nature . . . ne poet estre sanz grant significacioun"). Although in the end he has Sir John admit to pious ignorance—"I do not know the reason why this is; God knows, who knows everything" ("Ieo ne say le resoun pur quoi ceo est; Dieu le sciet, qi tot sciet")—the author first has him recount the local explanation. As throughout *The Book*, Sir John recounts what the people say without vouching for it, as if raising the matter for discussion in the audience. Yet since he considers the marvel significant and since the people cite Scripture in their explanation (Gen. 1: 28), its very presentation is skewed toward the positive:

Et ne sciet homme la cause pur quoi ceo poet estre. Mais cils de pais dient qe ceo est pur faire reuerence a lour roi, qi est le plus dignes qi soit, si come ils dient, et pur ceo qil adcomplist ceo qe Dieu dit a Adam, *Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram*; et pur ceo qil multiplie ensi le monde de ses enfantz, pur ceo enuoie Dieu le pesshoun de tot la mer [pour prendre] en sa voluntee pur luy et pur soun pais, et ensi tot pesshoun [de la mer] se rent a luy en fessant homage, come al pluis excellent et a mieltz ame de Dieu [qui soit en ce monde], si come ils dient.⁵⁸

And no one knows the cause why this could be. But those of the country say that it is to show reverence to their king, who is the most worthy there is, as they say, and because he achieved what God said to Adam, *Grow and multiply and fill the earth*; and therefore he has thus multiplied the world with his children, wherefore God by His will sent the fish of all the sea [for the taking] for him and his country, and so all the fish [of the sea] render themselves to him in homage, as though to the most excellent and best soul of God [who is in this world], as they say.

Like those of the Amazons and the Canophales, this apparently ideal realm seems to have been described more as a means to provoke reflection than as a model for imitation, since it too is flawed: just as the Amazons' admirable chastity depends on a historical accident, as it were, the Calonakan king's procreative accomplishments stem from his having many wives. What this particular juxtaposition suggests, then—since it shows *The Book* depicting both sexual restraint and (divinely enjoined) sexual indulgence favorably—is that many of the text's wonders resemble speculative explorations into recognizably possible worlds characterized by diverse forms of human and sometimes natural Otherness. The result, for modern as well as medieval readers, is a vicarious journey through a marvelous gallery that offers a shifting mix of pleasure, puzzlement, repulsion, instruction, and (historically-specific cultural) Self-criticism.

Adjusting the Mirrors and Conjuring Up Ogier

Without exception, *The Book's* intermediaries retrace part or all of this memorable speculative journey, but several of them tilt the mirrors so as to block the Self-criticism. Typically, these are the isotopes that undo the *Mandeville*-author's emphasis on symmetry in the Lamorian excursus: the Bodley, Metrical, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin Versions (the Latin Amazons being a notable anomaly). The last two redactions, each adapting the Interpolated Continental Version, also introduce a different kind of mirror into the account of Calonak: Sir John's precursor and Doppelgänger, Ogier the Dane.

Of the other isotopes, only the Cotton and Egerton Versions allow the specular reading articulated in the previous sections; this reading can perhaps be pursued in the Velser Version, which retains part of the excursus, as well as in the few copies of the Defective Version that have not lost the whole passage, but because the body of evidence in these renderings is somewhat smaller, such an interpretation would not necessarily have suggested itself to anyone unacquainted with the Continental or Insular Version.

The famous set-piece list of monsters, not surprisingly, turns up largely intact in the various renderings. The Metrical Version alone lacks it,⁵⁹ while the Defective and Velser Versions keep it in slightly shortened form, the latter in a fashion that seems due not to design but to the accidents of transmission, since the truncated list runs without pause into the account of Manzi, passing from a race who use their enormous lips as sunshades to sparse-bearded men and beautiful women, as if the classical Plinian peoples had absorbed the more recently known Manzian. Rather than alter the catalogue, several redactions adapt its local context. In the von Diemerungen and Vulgate Latin Versions, for example, it no longer caps the journey through Ynde and its isles; in the former, it precedes a modified sketch of the dog-headed people, who are thus replaced among their classical cohorts, while in the Vulgate Latin the list leads into a displaced and much reduced cosmographical excursus, as if the redactor thought that measurement and not monstrosity should mark the local close. The most significant displacement, though, comes in the Bodley Version's two copies, both of which relocate the catalogue (along with the marvelous Calonakan fish) to different spots near *The Book's* close, the Rawlinson copy setting it right before the longish epilogue, so that the list of monsters leads into the summarizing claim (discussed in chapter 8) that all peoples possessed of reason have some knowledge of the One True God.

If we turn from the proto-ethnographic catalogue to the three mirroring marvels, we find that the Cotton and Egerton renderings alone, as noted, make no "uncritical" adjustments; if anything, their few changes lightly polish the Self-critical surface. The Cotton text, for example, slightly enhances the Amazonian reflection by noting that the women fight external wars for pay "as othere sowdyoures don," and the Egerton text does something similar to the dog-headed mirror by supplementing the crimes that the king's justice prevents: "And þerfore men may ga sauely and sikerly thurgh his land and na man be so hardy to disturbe þam, ne robbe þam, ne take fra þam any maner of gude." In contrast, Velser's Version does not refer to the dog-headed king's justice or depict his Christian-like piety; it also omits the marvelous fish story, such that its one enhancing change occurs in the picture of Amazonia, whose politics are now meritocratic to a fault: "And as often as one woman does a

good deed better than the queen, she is elected" ("Und als ouch aine ain gûtt tätt tûtt besser wann die kûngin, die wûrt erwelt").⁶⁰

If the Velser and Cotton Versions lightly touch up the reflective Amazonian mirror, three other renderings tilt it so as to direct attention away from the political order to the realm's origins and exotic customs. Thus, the Metrical Version merely notes that the queen is elected, the Defective Version that she rules well, while the von Diemeringen Version says nothing at all about the matter, highlighting instead the women's controlled sexual behavior and praising their "manly" deeds: "Thus have they held their kingdom without a man and they have since performed many great things with Hercules and against the Greeks and also against other pagans, because they have the true courage of a man and great boldness" ("So hant sy das konigriche von Amazonien jnne gehapt aen manne und hant synt maniche grosse dyng volnbracht mit Ercules und widder die kriecken und auch geyn ander heiden, want sy hant rechten mannes mût und grosse kunheit").⁶¹

Unlike these renderings, and far more than the Cotton and Velser Versions, the Vulgate Latin takes the highly unusual step (for itself) of adjusting the Amazonian mirror so that its more clerical and worldly-wise sketch of the realm's monastico-feudal order enhances the Self-critical potential. Regarding sexual practices, for example, the women are now allowed two meetings per year ("bis in anno") with their mates, "on condition that none extend the duration of seven natural days upon pain of certain death" ("ita vt nulla moram trahat septem dierum naturalium sub poena indubitata occisionis")—a recognition of the power of sexual temptation that is absent from the Continental and Insular Versions. Similarly, on the subjects of the elected queen and the maintenance of the social order, the Latin rendering discloses a writer who has thought more fully than has the *Mandeville*-author about human behavior:

Et tandem post reformatam inter se pacem mulieres inito consilio statuerunt se solas absque viris dominari in terra, atque ex tunc [sibi sumunt reginam] per certam electionis formam, quae robusta, agilis, sapiens, iuuenis, ac valens apparet in armis. . . . Regina cum consiliaribus & officialibus suis regit sapienter & bene terram, & seruat omnes sibi sub districta obedientia, per leges, & poenas, & amendas conscriptas. Et cum circumiacentium insularum Reges contra se ad inuicem proeliari [habent], tunc Regina Amazoniae cum suis Nobilibus ab vna parte pro magno stipendio vocari solet in adiutorium, vbi & inuentae sunt sapientes in consilijs, probae in armis, acres in conflictibus, & in omnibus Curiae actibus bene valentes.⁶²

And at length after the renewed peace among themselves the women made the initial decision to rule themselves alone without men in the land, and since then through

the fixed form of an election [they choose for themselves a queen] who appears hardy, swift, wise, young, and brave in arms. . . . With her advisers and officials the Queen rules the land very wisely and well, and keeps everyone under her in strict obedience through written laws, penalties, and corrections. And whenever the Kings of the islands lying round about have to make war among themselves, the Queen of Amazonia with her Nobles is used to being summoned in aid by one party for a large fee, and with her are found those wise in counsel, tried in arms, fierce in struggles, and very effective in all the deeds of Court.

As if to confirm how anomalous its enhanced depiction of this almost ideal secular realm is, the Vulgate Latin Version's portrait of the dog-headed people's religious domain draws most attention to their fine physical qualities and the virtues of the king's ruby. The ruler's piety, in contrast, is denigrated—"The king is very rich and powerful, but devout in superstition" ("Rex multum est diues & potens, ac deuotus in superstitione")—and his justice is now given to the entire people and depicted in a way that contradicts the text's praise of the Amazonian regime: "They are . . . very rational, and most virtuous, but they exercise a hard justice against all crimes" ("Rationabiles . . . multum sunt hij, & plurimum virtuos, ac de omni forefacto rigidam iustitiam exercentes"). Hardly a critical mirror here, the dog-headed society is even less so in Velser's Version, as noted already, or in the Bodley and Metrical Versions, from which the people simply disappears.⁶³

Only the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions in fact do not block the reflective aspect of this particular portrait; the last even slightly enhances it, as we saw above. Unusually, von Diemeringen's displaced account also polishes the mirror, most notably by emphasizing the dog-headed people's piety and rational faith, as if this portrait were done up with details from *The Book's* other accounts of pagan piety, accounts that the German redactor regularly omits. Nevertheless, the shine is created in such a way as to obscure the portrait's critical potential. Thus even though this version makes the people good, godfearing, and obedient to their pious and elected king (who is also rich or powerful in some manuscripts), it explains their virtues and vices by means of their canine nature, the latter reflected mainly by their wartime cannibalism: "And they are also a good religious people according to their belief and they are quite godfearing. But they all have dog's heads . . . [yet] they are obedient and loyal to their ruler, as dogs are to their masters. . . . And if it happens that they capture their enemies, they eat them. That is a little like a dog's habits" ("Und sint auch gude geistliche lude nach jrem glauben und synt auch godforchtig gnung. Me sye hant alle gar hundes heubte . . . [doch] sint jrme herren gehorsam und getruwe, also hunde jren herren synt. . . . Und

ist es, das sye ir vihende vahent, so essent sye sye. Das ist enwenig noch hundes sitten").⁶⁴

Reworked as it is in this way (the people's scant clothing and physical prowess also receive greater attention), von Diemeringen's depiction of the people overwhelms that of the king, who dominates in the Continental and Insular Versions. To be sure, the German redactor gives him almost as much space as does the *Mandeville*-author, but the royal portrait no longer stands out, and so no longer offers an obvious vision of pious rule, since even the king's ruby seems to interest the redactor more than does his justice: "I have seen the ruby" ("ich han den rubyn gesehen"), Sir John is made to say.

If the von Diemeringen Version makes the dog-headed people's obedience a kind of instinctive animal virtue and thus prevents the portrait of their social harmony from serving as a critical mirror, both it and the Vulgate Latin Version render the noble obedience to God celebrated in the marvel of the fishes effectively inimitable. Depicted as biological in the Continental and Insular Versions (it is expressed by the local king's fulfilling God's procreative injunction to Adam and Eve), the virtue appears in these redactions as military and religious at once, by its association with the chivalric hero Ogier the Dane. In the von Diemeringen and Latin Version's common source, Ogier displaces the king as the marvel's cause, Sir John plays only a supporting role as the Dane's celebrant, and the theological meaning of the event is quite transformed. Thus, instead of depicting a far-eastern people able to quote Scripture, a significant gesture in the *Mandeville*-author's world of mirrors, the Liège Version presents Ogier as conquering the East on God's behalf and suggests that peoples both far and near regard some "choses estranges" as signs that God approves of Christian expansion. The speculative portrait, in fact, now shows East and West reflecting each other in their historical *authorities* alone:

Et dient chil du pays que il ne seuent par quel rayson che puet autrement que il ont en lors hystoyres que quant Ogiers le danoys conquist cest yslle. Sy ly enuoia dieus ces pissons par vne famine . . . quant il prist farine vin et miel as arbres en l'ysle de calamach. Je ne say la rayson autrement que ie vous dys. Mais che me samble la plus grande merueille que ie veysse onques. . . . Mais ceste est contre nature. . . . Et certainement che ne peut estre sans grant miracle de dieu. Et pour tant que dieus ayma tant le Duc Ogier le danoys ie croys asses legierement che que il en dient. Et aussy on treuve tout che en lor croniques et en celles de nostre pays mesmes de engleterre et dautre part.⁶⁵

And those of the country say that they do not know by what cause this [marvel] can exist except what they have in their histories when Ogier the Dane conquered this isle. And God sent him these fish during a famine . . . when he took flour, wine, and

honey from the trees on the isle of Calamach. I do not know the reason except what I have told you. But it seems to me the greatest marvel I have ever seen. . . . But this is against nature. . . . And certainly that cannot be without a great miracle of God. And inasmuch as God very much loved Duke Ogier the Dane I quite readily believe what they say about this. And also one finds all this in their chronicles and in those of our countries even of England and elsewhere.

Although they clearly use this passage, neither the von Diemeringen Version nor the Vulgate Latin calls the marvel “unnatural” or retains its form of the theological rationale. In the case of von Diemeringen’s text, the changes evidently have to do with the redactor’s knowledge of a like marvel closer to home, which allows the translator to offer a naturalizing explanation; in the case of the Latin, the changes may have been made because the redactor has already theologized all far-eastern marvels in his “*persuasio ad non credentes*.” Of the two, the latter’s account is (unusually) the more credulous, since the marvel is taken for granted as God’s way of commemorating a faithful servant and is implicitly used to raise Sir John to a similar plane: “For I also caught very many myself; whence it is to be noted that at the same time of the year at which is extracted the above-mentioned flour, honey, and wine, these fish arrive there: which two marvels God once performed at one time for his [officer] Ogier, and which in his memory are renewed once a year until now” (“*Nam & ego ipse cepi quamplures. Vnde notandum, quod eodem tempore anni quo super dicta extrahitur farina, mel, & vinum, conueniunt in hoc isti pisces: quae ambo mirabilia fecit vno tempore Deus olim [pro duce] suo Ogero, quae & in memoria illius, vsque nunc, singulis annis innouantur*”).⁶⁶

Von Diemeringen’s redaction claims to derive from both the Latin and the Liège Versions, but it more closely resembles the French text in its handling of this passage. Nevertheless, it too makes substantial changes. After describing the gathering of the fish in heightened fashion, the German redactor has the English Knight express what must have been the audience’s doubts, only to undo them with a personal testimonial. The testimony complete, the text offers a naturalizing European analogy made by some of the local people, such that the scene resembles the later one where Sir John tells the people of “Caldihle” about the barnacle geese, a scene absent from this German version: “I certainly . . . did not want to believe it. But when I saw it, then I had to believe it. And some in that country believe that, just as here the salmon climbs uphill, that they had air and the taste of trees, since they could not otherwise live. Thus the fish must have and seek some plants as food in necessity” (“*Sicher ich en . . . wolte es nit glauben. Me do ich es gesach, do must ich es glauben. Und meynent ettelich in dem lande, do recht also hye salman*

wyder berg styget, das sye den lufft hetten und den gesmack von den boumen, sye mochten anders nit leben. Also mussent dye visch do etwas wurtzlin do zu not narung hant und suchen").⁶⁷

Having thus naturalized the marvel, von Diemeringen's Version introduces Ogier, and his appearance—the tenth of twenty-three—is not so confident as in the Liège Version or the Vulgate Latin (or indeed as in many of his other appearances in the German version), although the scene vaguely recalls the Gospel miracle of the loaves and fishes: "Others believe that God thus sent the fish there, when Ogier and his army drew near and they did not have enough to eat. And one finds this written in their books, which they call their chronicles" ("Dye andern meynent, goit, der schick also dye vysch dar, do Oyger und syn here do hin zuhent, und das sye nit zu essen genug hettent. Und vindet man do geschriben in iren buchern, dye sye ir cron[i]ken nennent"). Christian History and the written word still link East and West in von Diemeringen's Version, then, and the two "antipodal" regions still mirror each other, but no longer in the manner of the *Mandeville*-author's version. For one thing, the mirror of nature receives attention here, as it does not in von Diemeringen's sources, which use the barnacle geese to connect East and West; for another, the historical link itself is more recent and more tenuous, more anecdotal than authoritative, since it consists in the fact that "they" record worthy events just as "we" do, and that "their" records include images of "our" (former) greatness.

Expansive power of the sort given to Ogier the Dane in the Liège Version and its redactions receives considerable attention in the Continental and Insular Versions, which give little space to Christian empire, and depicts it as belonging, like Ogier, to a heroic past defined by a few figures: Justinian, Constantine, crusading kings like England's Richard I, or the Latin kings of Jerusalem. Against this occasional backdrop, which is first conjured up in the exordium's reference to fighting among Latin Christian "seignurs terriens," *The Book* sketches several contrastive portraits of expansive courtly power so dazzling that it makes the forceful authority of the Amazonian queen or the dog-headed king look ordinary. The first of these portraits, that of the Egyptian Sultan, we have already seen as we looked at the *Mandeville*-author's depiction of him as a critic of Christendom and prophet of his own people's demise after Christian reform. Such matters arise once again in the portraits of two even more remarkable figures of power, both of them mentioned in *The Book*'s admiring survey of the Sultan's domain: the Great Khan of Cathay and Prester John. Their portraits, along with those of some exemplary Christians and the "Jews" of Gog and Magog, are examined in the next chapter.

Faith and Power in the Great Khan's Cathay and Prester John's Land

ONCE *THE BOOK* HAS COMPLETED ITS marvelous survey of Ynde and surrounding isles—which, as we saw in the previous chapter, closes with the brief catalogue of Plinian races written into Odoric's *Relatio* where the friar declines to describe any more *mirabilia*—the *Mandeville*-author follows his textual template across the Ocean Sea into a quite different world. Leaving behind for now the isles whose inhabitants are shown dwelling largely in a state of nature, the instructive itinerary passes through the great cities of Manzi into the still greater realm of Cathay, whose inhabitants are depicted dwelling in a state of civilization almost unimaginable in fourteenth-century Latin Christendom—which had no high-speed communications network, paper money, or mechanical peacocks. To medieval audiences, as Polo knew, nothing in this new old world was as fascinating as the Great Khan, the almost mythical figure who embodied its magnitude, plenitude, power, and order; the *Mandeville*-author indulges that fascination here by greatly expanding Odoric's tour of the emperor's realm with material from two reliable, if slightly dated, sources: Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* and Hayton's *Flor des estoires*.¹

The result is the longest and richest of *The Book's* accounts of far-eastern places, peoples, and potentates. In fact, apart from the Holy Land, no territory receives as much textual space as does Cathay. Unlike the former region, however, whose sacred sites are often described in copious detail, the territory of Cathay is hardly noticed; most of the portrait is devoted to the local people's cultural marvels, history, customs, and manners, and it focuses especially on the Khan, whose power and religious tolerance are celebrated even as his lack of faith in God is lamented—though the text contradicts itself by also claiming that the Khan and his people believe in “Dieu immortel.” Discussing *The Book's* account of this and other parts of the farther East, Howard

notes that "the quality of [its] reality was different": "one could find Herod in Scripture, but not Ghengis Khan. Mandeville willingly accepts this circumstance."² The first two of these claims are true enough, but not the third, which overlooks the author's memorable attempt to fill the scriptural gap and bring the Tartars into Christian History by having them descend from Noah's cursed son Ham. Subtler than this forced assimilation is *The Book's* claim, in the ethnographic coda to the Cathayan portrait, that the Tartars have prophecies of their conquest and conversion by an unknown enemy—a claim that partly echoes the Saracen prophecies of their own empire's demise when the Latin Christians reform themselves.

Following the coda and its oblique suggestion that the Tartars may one day turn Christian, the *Mandeville*-author does not immediately resume Odoric's vague itinerary; instead, he borrows material from Hayton's *Flor* for an ethnogeographical overview of the territories on which "the realm of Cathay borders *toward the west*" ("ly roialme de Cathey marchist *vers occident*"). Only after this unexpected occidental excursion—which, by having one "descend" from Cathay, recalls the excursus on the earth's spherical shape—does the author return to his textual template.³ In the course of the interpolated westward detour, *The Book* passes through a land of darkness miraculously created by God to confound the enemies of Christ's name, and then ventures toward the terrestrial enclosure containing the "Jews" of Gog and Magog. Even more than the prophecy mentioned in the Tartar ethnography, these two ideologically charged passages reaffirm *The Book's* longstanding concern with faith, power, and the dream of Christian empire; the first proclaims that sinless Christians would rule the world, the latter mentions Jewish prophecies of their escape and conquest of the Christians at the time of Antichrist.

From this excursive juxtaposition of expansive hope and apocalyptic fear (the latter heightened by its peculiar anti-Jewish propaganda), the *Mandeville*-author brings the much overwritten itinerary into Prester John's Land, but does not follow Odoric in passing quickly on to "Riboth" (Tibet?) and the relatively short remainder of the friar's journey; rather, he pauses to offer a fuller look at the domain of Ynde's most illustrious Christian emperor, a ruler whose power no one but the Khan could rival. Most of the material presented here comes of course from the famous twelfth-century *Littera Presbyteris Johannis* (in its uninterpolated form), ostensibly written by Prester John to the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus, but the *Mandeville*-author has as usual made his own distinctive use of it. The resulting portrait of imperial splendor and apostolic simplicity—which emphasizes, among other things, Prester John's rich military resources and ascetic personal habits—not only

reflects on the preceding account of the Khan's realm, as if to suggest that this is what a converted Cathay might look like; it also serves as a mirror for the Christian princes criticized in the exordium, showing them disciplined power in the devout service of faith—in a land that *The Book* has already, significantly, placed diametrically opposite Latin Christendom on the spherical earth.

The persuasive force of this rhetorically skillful dialectic of intellectually weak and politically naïve reflections on power and piety is further enhanced here by a notable structural change that the *Mandeville*-author makes to his underlying source as the itinerary moves beyond Prester John's Land.⁴ He displaces a memorable history told by Odoric near the end of the *Relatio* so that it follows Prester John's portrait, and thus acquires a richer significance from its new context. The history in question concerns the rise and fall of the Old Man of the Mountain, as Odoric calls him (the leader of the Assassins, the Ismaili Shiite sect), whose false paradise of erotic pleasure is used to lure young men into a life of murder. The cautionary implications of this sordid tale are clear enough in Odoric's account, but they become even clearer in *The Book*, where they follow the celebration of Prester John's chaste Christian power.

In a similar fashion, the *Mandeville*-author makes the most of his explanation of Prester John's title by presenting it as a delayed coda to the larger portrait, leaving it until after the text recounts Alexander the Great's humbling encounter with the pious ascetics in the "Terre de Foy" (on which, see chapter 7 below). In context, the brief explanation—which tells of the emperor's curious pilgrimage to Egypt, where he sees priests being ordained in a Christian church and then aspires to no greater title than priest—takes on an exemplary quality, as does the very brief description in the same account of the simple, apostolic form of the mass celebrated in Prester John's Christian realm. Like the account of the "Terre de Foy," the coda can be read as an attempt to advertise the power of the simplest sort of faith and pious practice, to suggest perhaps that fourteenth-century Latin Christendom could model its much-needed spiritual reform on a faith uncorrupted by history and doctrinal disputes.

In the present chapter, I examine the *Mandeville*-author's tendentious celebration of power and faith in the several accounts just mentioned, as well as the varied responses to that celebration in *The Book*'s isotopes. Of particular interest is the way in which three of the celebratory accounts conjure up the dream of a vastly expanded Christendom, while also offering a series of small and mostly critical reflections on the practice of the faith at home. No less notable is the way in which the portraits of the world's two greatest rulers work to incorporate them into Christian History, thus joining East and West in one overarching geo-historical narrative. These are of course not the only

concerns in *The Book's* extended tour of the newest East known to medieval writers and readers—courtly wonders and the hierarchical order of empire are others—but they are prominent, and they are part of the author's continuing attempt not only to celebrate the marvelous diversity of distant “choses estranges,” but also to contain it within a familiar (religious) order while urging his audience to moral reform and offering them a vicarious compensation for Christendom's diminished state.

As always, *The Book's* isotopes reveal a variety of responses to its ideological aims and the rhetorical strategies by which they are often persuasively articulated, accepting, adapting, or resisting their source mostly at the level of detail, but sometimes at the larger levels of structure and theme. Both the von Diemerinen and Vulgate Latin Versions, for example, tidy up the portraits of the Khan and Prester John, each in its own way, just as each resists the attempt to incorporate the former into Christian History, and then, freely adapting the Liège Version, makes Prester John Ogier the Dane's biological and Christian heir. In addition, the Latin redaction condemns the blind paganism of the Khan's empire, thus undoing the *Mandeville*-author's neutral depiction of its religious openness, and it likewise denounces the pagan “squalor” into which many isles in Prester John's Ynde have relapsed. Curiously, this version also resists the claim that sinless Christians would rule the world, omitting it entirely, as does von Diemeringen's rendering, just as they and most other versions tone down the anti-Jewishness of the *Mandeville*-author's reshaped Gog and Magog legend; the Latin omits almost the whole legend as well.

Tartars and Christians: The Khan in Scripture, History, and Expansive Dreams

Virtually unknown in Latin Christendom until about the mid-thirteenth century, the Tartars gave sudden notice of their existence with a series of violent military campaigns into Russia and eastern Europe, leading some writers to link them, through their common medieval name, with Tartarus, or Hell. Viewed with fear and fascination, the Tartars soon became the target of diplomatic and religious missions, out of which came two of the most important medieval books about the East: John of Plano Carpini's *Ystoria Mongalorum* (1247) and William of Rubruck's *Itinerarium* (1255); each records a previously unimaginable overland journey into central Asia, though not as far as Cathay. Where Christian envoys could travel, of course, so could Christian merchants, and some soon did. One such venture gave rise to the most famous medieval “travel” book: Polo's *Divisament*. Amply represented as they were

in these and other writings, the Tartars soon became as familiar a part of the imagined East as the much older marvels of Ynde, such that by the late fourteenth century Chaucer's Squire could think to entertain his fellow pilgrims with a leisurely romance about "this Tartre Cambyuskan" (Gengis Khan).⁵

Like that later story, which includes a few details that may have been borrowed from *The Book*, the *Mandeville*-author's portrait of the Khan's world is decidedly leisurely, and parts of it have a romance "feel" to them. Most parts, though, have an air of historical or ethnographic actuality about them, in keeping with *The Book*'s own discursive mode so far and with that of its sources, including even Odoric's *Relatio*. The *Relatio* usually offers only the most basic information about places and peoples, but the friar makes an exception here, offering an account almost as long as the martyrology of his four brethren whose bones he collected in India. The result is a collection of facts on several subjects, with a not quite random, not quite rationalized disposition typical of the *Relatio* as a whole: a) the Khan's palace; b) seating and other arrangements at court; c) those at court, including Odoric himself and other friars minor; d) the Khan's royal progress to and fro between his two principal dwellings, Cambalech and "Sadu" (Shang-tu, Coleridge's "Xanadu"); e) the extent of the Khan's empire; f) his elaborate communications system; g) the local Franciscan bishop's mode of blessing the Khan when he has to ride out, a rite in which Odoric once participated;⁶ h) his way of hunting; i) his four annual feasts (his birthday, the anniversary of his circumcision, and two others for his idol);⁷ and j) the use of paper as money to pay for these and other great expenses.

Most of these subjects find their way into *The Book*, rearranged and augmented by almost as many additional subjects, both historical and ethnographic, that shift the focus from the court toward the Khan, in keeping with the text's emphasis on figures of power. Twice as long as the friar's report, the overwritten result is even less well organized, but its formal shortcomings are largely compensated for by the greater interest and livelier presentation of its sometimes contradictory expository and narrative material. Even more than his underlying source, the *Mandeville*-author pays attention to the Khan's and his people's relation to Christian History and their views on God, Christianity, and Christians, such that this religious concern becomes, if not quite a leitmotif, certainly a recurrent theme that repeatedly conjures up the dream of a vastly expanded Christendom.⁸

Before discussing the Khan's beliefs, though, the author follows Odoric into the Tartar court, and then, after dazzling the audience with its romance-like marvels (Odoric's a and b), writes Sir John into the account where the friar steps forward to authenticate his account by claiming to have spent three

years at court among his Franciscan brethren, during which time he was able to learn about the Khan's domain (Odoric's c). Sir John's appearance—which announces his fifteen-month service, in the company of his comrades and their attendants, under the Khan in a war against the king of Manzi (the war actually took place in the late thirteenth century)—likewise serves to “confirm” the credibility of the account; but unlike the friar, the Knight also raises the question of credibility as such. He does so by stating that he and his fellows went to Cathay expressly to find out whether the court was as wonderful as it was said to be, a claim that recalls the Queen of Sheba's assertion that she journeyed to see Solomon so as to confirm his renown (2 Chr. 9: 5–6).⁹

For Odoric, the question of credibility comes up only later and in passing, when he makes the commonplace claim that the magnitude of the Khan's dominion almost surpasses belief: “There is hardly any who would dare believe the great number of people that this king leads with him” (“A peines est-il nulz qui osast croire la grant multitude de gens que ce roy maine avec lui”). In contrast, the question is the very point of Sir John's visit (as if he were one of the Sultan's spies), and the *Mandeville*-author has him attempt to answer it in two ways: first by asserting that he and his comrades found everything greater than the common word would have it—so much so that they would never have believed it, had they not seen it themselves; and then by daring the audience to disbelieve. This dare is the probable source of Sir John's similar challenge in the Vulgate Latin Version's theological apology for wonders, but unlike the Latin redactor, who raises the matter as soon as the text leaves the Holy Land, the *Mandeville*-author waits until the text reaches a territory and a subject whose relative historical novelty meant that they still lacked the authenticity conferred by tradition or by textual and cartographic *auctoritates*:

*Qar ceo nest mie come par de cea. . . . Et, come bien qe ascun gent ne me vourroient croire et qil tiendront a fable a eux deuiser la noblesse de sa persone et de soun estat et de sa court . . . nien mayns en dirray ieo vne partie de ly et de ses gentz, solonc ceo qe iay veu . . . par plusours foitz; et qi voudra, il me crerra, si ly plect, et qi ne voudra, il sen lerra [et qui ne vouldra, ie nen puis mais]. . . . Et cils qi aueront este en cely pais ou en lostel de Grant Chan, saueront bien qe ieo dy voir. Sy ne lesseray mie pur ceux qi rien ne scient et qi rien ne croient, sil ne le voient, de deuiser vne partie de ly et del estate.*¹⁰

For it is not like over here. . . . And although some people will not want to believe me and will consider it a fable to describe to them the nobility of his person and of his estate and of his court . . . nevertheless I shall tell a part of it about him and about his people, according to what I have seen . . . many times; and whoever wants to will believe me, if it pleases him, and whoever does not will go wrong [and whoever does not—I can no more]. . . . And those who have been in that country or in the Great Khan's lodging will know

well that I speak the truth. And because of those who know nothing and who believe nothing unless they see it, I shall not leave off describing a part of him and of his estate.

This assertion is cunningly made, since the very first subject in the ensuing portrait of the Khan's and his people's Otherness, which is also the first occurrence of the important religious theme, might well have provoked the disbelief anticipated in Sir John's challenge. The subject is the origin of the Khan's imperial title, specifically the claim that "Chan [Cham]" commemorates the Tartars' descent from the worst of Noah's three sons, "Sem, Cham, and Iaphez [Iaffet]," after they had divided the tripartite earth among themselves. Overwriting the received interpretation of Genesis 10: 32 (as represented, for example, on the Noachid *mappaemundi*), this unprecedented claim switches the places taken by "Sem" and "Cham": "And this Cham because of his [great] cruelty took the largest part and the best part in the east, which is called Asia. And Sem took Africa, and Iaphez took Europe. . . . Of these three brothers Cham was the greatest and the strongest; and from him descended more generations than from the others" ("Et cis Cham pur sa [grande] cru alte prist la plus grant partie et la meilour partie orientele, qi est appelle Asye. Et Sem prist Affrique, et Iaphez prist Europe. . . . De ces iii. freres Cham fust ly plus grant et ly plus puissant; et de ly descendirent plus de generacions qe des autres").¹¹

Having thus laid out his revised genealogical geography, the *Mandeville*-author has only to take the obvious step, linking "Cham" with "Chan." Before he does so, though, he traces Cham's line somewhat further, through "Chus" (Cush) and Nimrod "the giant" ("Membroch ly geaunt"), the world's first king, who began the tower of "Babyloigne." The result is startling: "And with that the enemies from hell often came to sleep with women of his race, and they begat various monstrous and disfigured peoples. . . . And of this race of Cham the pagan people have come and the various peoples who are on the isles in the sea through all Ynde [Asia]" ("Et ouesqe ceo ly enemis denferne venoient souent coucher ouesqe femmes de sa generacioun, et engendrerent diuersez gentz monstres et gentz defigurez. . . . Et de celle generacion de Cham sount venuz ly paiene gent et les diuers gentz qi sount as isles de mer par tout Ynde [Asye]").¹²

Here clearly is an attitude toward religious and cultural diversity that runs against the grain of everything that we have seen so far, for the many eastern peoples suddenly look like the single race of Cain.¹³ This is a puzzling moment, and quite inexplicable, given that *The Book* depicts very few peoples negatively. Nor is it explained by the text's return to the expected connection between "Cham" and "Chan," since the latter figure is now seen

as descended from primal evil—a suggestion that has no echo in the larger account, although it does hark back to the earliest depictions of the Tartars, whether in Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora*, or in those writers who saw them as the kin of Gog and Magog or Ishmael: "And because he was the strongest and no one could contradict him, he called himself son of God and ruler of the whole world. And because of this Cham these emperors [since] call themselves Cham [Chan] and [son of nature and] ruler of all [of the whole world; and thus he calls himself in his letters]" ("Et, pur ceo qil estoit le plus puissant et nul ne poet encontredire ly, il [s]appelloit filz de Dieu et souerein de tout le mounde. Et pur ceo ly Cham cis emperers [depuis] sappelle Cham [Chan] et [filz de nature et] souerein de touz [de tout le monde; et ainsi sappelloit il en ses lectres]").¹⁴

No sooner has Sir John advanced this onomastic claim, though, than he retracts it on the basis of knowledge acquired in Ynde, a subtle rhetorical move that allows him to reassert the biblical genealogy while passing on to a more plausible explanation of the emperor's title: "Nevertheless, the truth is that the Tartars and those who dwell in large Asia descended from Cham. But the emperors of Cathay do not call themselves Cham, but Chan; and I shall tell you the truth how" ("Nientmeinz verite est qe ly Tartarins et cils qi demoerent en la grant Asye descenderount de Cham. Mes ly emperers de Cathay ne sappelle mie Cham, mes Chan; si vous dirray la verite coment").¹⁵ Sir John's truth is as fanciful as the discredited explanation, but it must have seemed more likely to medieval audiences. Adapting an episode in Hayton's history of the Tartars' rise under "Canguis," whom his followers proclaimed "Kaan" (i.e., Gengis Khan), the *Mandeville*-author has his Knight offer a second onomastic explanation: addressed as "Chan" by the white knight who comes to him in a dream and says that immortal God wants him to be a conquering emperor, *The Book*'s "Changuys" is thus styled "Chan" by his followers, "just as the white knight called him" ("si come ly blanc chiualer lauoit appelle").¹⁶

Having spun this "true" explanation out of Hayton's history, the *Mandeville*-author now turns the rest of his source's rather pedestrian account into one of the two or three best sustained narratives in *The Book*, making Hayton's already medievalized Tartars look more like chivalric heroes than like Cham's kin and Nimrod's hellish spawn. Significantly, the author traces this history only in its early heroic phase, ending it with Changuys's dramatic deathbed proof to his twelve sons that just as a bundle of twelve arrows held by three strings cannot be broken, so the three bonds of "love, loyalty, and harmony" ("amour," "loialte [loial cuer]," "concord") will sustain a world empire—a gospel-like parable whose import would not have been lost on *The Book*'s audience.¹⁷

No less significantly, the *Mandeville*-author compresses Hayton's further chapters on the Tartar empire's complex history into a single paragraph (reminiscent of the earlier history of the Egyptian Sultanate) about the memorable moment in the mid-thirteenth century when the empire might have become allied against the Saracens in the Holy Land. Even in Cathay, then, crucial elements of *The Book's* portrait of the biblical East remain a ghostly presence: "And then Halaoun [Hulagu] had won the entire Land of Promise and placed it in the hands of the Christians; but the Great Chan died [at that moment], and the whole business went bad. After Mango Chan, Cobila Chan reigned, who was also Christian. . . . The next Great Chan who came after became pagan, and all the others after as well" ("Et puis eust Halaoun gaigne toute la Terre de Promissioun et mis en mains des Cristiens; mes ly Grant Chan morust [en ce temps], si fust ly affaires toute empeschez. Apres Mango Chan regna Cobila Chan, qi fuist auxi Cristiens. . . . Ly autre Grant Chan qi vient apres deuient paiens, et toutz ly autres apres auxi").¹⁸

Few readers by now will recall that this historical narrative began as an explanation of the Khan's title, but the *Mandeville*-author here returns briefly to the subject, and notes how the emperor styles himself a divine ruler in his letters and seals: "Chan, filius Dei excelsi," and so on. Like this designation, the Khan's imperial titles are all given in Latin, as if he were a Christian king or the pope; he is not such a figure, of course, but he does share with them more than his grandiose appellations: "And although they are not now Christians, nevertheless the emperor and all the Tartars believe in God immortal [and all powerful]" ("Et, come bien qils ne sount maintenant Cristiens, nient mains ly emperers et toutz ly Tartaryns croient en Dieu immortel [et tout puissant]").¹⁹

From this digressive account of the Khan's titles—which serves to place the Tartars relative to both Scriptural History and the recent Christian past, as well as to make them former Christians who still believe in one God—the text resumes its account of the emperor's realm, as the *Mandeville*-author returns to the remaining elements of Odoric's report (c–j above), reordering them i, c, j, d, e, f, g, f, while also further supplementing them.²⁰ Like the previous set of loosely linked subjects, this set contains several partly contradictory remarks on the Khan's and his people's relation to Christians, Christianity, and God, and offers *The Book's* audience opportunities to be hopeful or disappointed, consoled, criticized, or challenged, according to the moment and their mood.

In elaborating, for example, Odoric's description of the celebrations held on the emperor's four feast days (his subject i), the *Mandeville*-author turns a courtly wonder into a device for challenging Christians to do better: not spiritually, as in Sir John's colloquy with the Sultan, but practically in their arts and sciences. The wonder is a collection of mechanical birds, whose fine

artifice the author enhances in an almost Yeatsian way, re-imagining (with the help of details from the account of King Porus's palace in the *Roman d'Alexandre*) what Odoric had actually seen and described as devices "made . . . by human knowledge or the devil's art" ("faits . . . par science d'homme ou par art de diable"). Less certain, Sir John is more full of wonder—"Whether this is by design or by necromancy I do not know; but it is very fine to see them, and this is a great wonder, however it may be" ("Si ceo est par artifice ou par nigromancie, ico ne say; mes il les fait tres beau veir, et cy est ceo grant meruaille, coment ceo poet estre")—and he praises the Tartars for their unsurpassed "subtilite," "malice," and "engin" (or skill):

Et pur ceo dient ils qils voient de deux oilz, et ly Cristiens ne voient qe dun oil, pur ceo qils sont plus subtils apres eaux; mes toutes autres nacions ils dient estre auueglez, et en sciences et en oueraignes. Ico mis molt grant peine assauoir [aucune parties de ces jeux]; mes ly maistre me dit qil auoit vowe a soun dieu [Dieu Inmortel] qil nel apprendroit a nully, forske al eysnez de ses filz.²¹

And therefore they say that they see with two eyes, and the Christians see with only one, because they are most subtle after them; but all other peoples they say are blind, both in knowledge and in works. I took great trouble to learn [some parts of these tricks]; but the master told me that he had vowed to his god [God Immortal] that he would teach it to no one but his eldest son.

This memorable mirror of Christian backwardness, with its backhanded praise thereof, is not the *Mandeville*-author's own invention, as one might expect (only the Knightly *histor*'s enquiries are); rather, the reflection is created by the subtle redeployment of a very differently aimed comment in Hayton's overview of Cathay:

Cestes gens, qui tant sont simples en lur creance e es choses espriteus, sont plus sages e plus sotils que totes autres gens es euvres corporels. E dient les Cataïns que il sont ceus qui voient de II oils, e des Latins disent q'il voient d'un oil, mès les autres nacions dient que sont auuegles. E por ce puet om entendre que il tiennent les autres gens de gros entendement.²²

This people, who are so simple in their belief and in spiritual things, are wiser and subtler than all other peoples in corporeal works. *And the Cathayans say that they are those who see with two eyes and the Latins they say see with one eye, but the other peoples they say are blind. And by this one can understand that they consider the other peoples of crude understanding.*

According to Hayton, then, such technological skills are all the more remarkable given the Cathayans' spiritual simplicity (such simplicity, as the next

chapter shows, is usually depicted by the *Mandeville*-author as a rationally motivated love of God's creation), and the ocular analogy looks like an appropriate self-description, the Cathayans' worldly arrogance being justified by their works. Dispensing with Hayton's self-serving contrast between the spiritual and the corporeal, which would have clashed with *The Book's* negative remarks on Latin Christian piety, the author neatly sets the borrowed words into a context that gives them a critical, possibly even moral resonance and that thus turns them back on the text's audience (who fortunately are still one eye up on everybody else).

From this indirect criticism with its implied challenge to the audience, the *Mandeville*-author turns to consolation in the next two religious references, a move in keeping with the dialectic of praise and blame in *The Book's* specular passage through the East. The first consolation comes as the author turns from the Khan's feast days to those at court (from Odoric's i to c), and it serves to counterbalance the Tartar claim that the Christians are deficient in knowledge. According to Odoric, in a comment made at the end of the authenticating remarks discussed earlier, the Khan's court is peopled by Christians, Saracens, "idolaters," and Tartars "convertis à nostre foy," as well as by "physicians who take care of the king's body, 300 [of them] idolators, 8 Christians, and 7 Saracens" ("médicins qui gardent le corps du roys, III^c ydolâtres, VIII cretiens et VII sarazins"). Partly contradicting the text's remarks about the state of Tartar knowledge, the *Mandeville*-author significantly revises the friar's figures in a manner that must have consoled his "one-eyed" audience: "This emperor has for his body a good 200 physicians who are all Christians; and of Christian master leeches he has a good 210; and also 20 who are Saracens. For he trusts in [the work of] the Christians much more than in [that of] the Saracens" ("Cilz empereur a pour son corps bien cc. phisiciens, qui sont tous Crestiens; et si a des maistres mires Crestiens . . . bien cc. et x., et xx. mires qui sont Sarrasins. Car trop plus il se fie es Crestiens que as Sarrasins [en lourage des Cristiens qe des Sarazins]"). In addition, the author adapts Odoric's remarks about the Tartar converts so as to enhance the harvest made by the friar's confreres while he offers his audience a further consolation for the "business that went bad" in the Holy Land by conjuring up the dream of an even greater expansion: "And there are in his court many barons and [many] servants who are Christians and converted to the good faith by the preaching of the [good] Christian orders who dwell there, but there are many who [but the majority] do not want it known that they are Christians" ("Et si ad en sa court plusours barouns et [pluseurs] seruitours qi sount Cristiens et conuertiz a la bone foy par lez prechementz des [bons] religious Cristiens

qi la demoerent, mes il y a plusours qi [mais les pluseurs] ne voillent mie qe homme sache qils soient Cristiens").²³

Yet another partly contradictory consolation is offered in the next reference to the Khan's beliefs. Here the *Mandeville*-author adapts le Long's rendering of Odoric's participation in the local friar bishop's rite of blessing the Khan (Odoric's g), adding a significant comment on the Khan's respect for the cross: "the prelate of these monks says prayers before him and then blesses him with the [said] cross; and he bows to the blessing most devoutly" ("le prelat de ces religious dit auant ly des orisons, et puis ly donne la beneceoun ouesqe la [dicte] crois; et il sencline a la beneceoun molt deuoutement"). After this, according to le Long's Odoric, the bishop gives the Khan some fruit, so as not to appear before him without a gift, a custom that *The Book* explains by assimilating it into biblical tradition, giving the Tartars the same knowledge of the Bible's earliest parts as it gives to many other eastern peoples: "the custom is such that no foreigner may approach who does not give him something, according to the old law, which says, 'N[one] shall appear before me empty-handed' [Exodus 23: 15]" ("la custume est tiel qe nul estrange ne doit venir deuaunt qi ne ly donne ascun chose, solonc la ley aunciene qi dit, *N[emo] accedat in conspectu meo vacuus*").²⁴

This explanation makes the Khan something of a god himself, but *The Book* never shows him as a Luciferian usurper; indeed, only a few sentences later, as the *Mandeville*-author is putting the final touches on his portrait, the Cathayan emperor's unrivaled power is acknowledged in a positive way. The point of this acknowledgment, though, is not the Khan's power in itself, as in Polo's account of "Cublai Can": "all the emperors in the world and all the kings of the Christians and the Saracens would not have as much power nor could they do as much as this Cublai the great Can could do." In contrast, in a passage that echoes the proleptic reference to the Khan in Egypt (quoted in chapter 4 above), *The Book* focuses on the implications of the Khan's power for the dream of Christian expansion—a dream banished and yet sustained the moment it is evoked. The passage implicitly challenges the audience to undertake further missions to the Tartars even as it offers them the sort of consolation latent in the passages discussed above:

Dessouz la firmament nad point de si grant seignur ne de si puissant come est ly Grant Chan, ne dessure terre ne dessouz, qar ne Prestre Iohan, qi est emperour de la haut Ynde, ne ly soudan de Babiloigne, ne lempereur de Percie nad comparisoun a ly, ne de puissance ne de noblesse ne de richesse, qar en tout ceo il passe toutz les princes terriens. Dount cest grant damage qil ne croit firmement en Dieu. Et nient meinz il en

oyt tresuolentiers parler de Dieu, et si suffre bien qil y soit Cristiens qi voet [et veult bien que tous Crestiens voient bien et paisiblement] par tout son pais; qar [ou pays de la] homme ne defent a nully tenir tiel loy come il voet.²⁵

There is beneath the firmament no lord so great or so powerful as is the Great Chan, neither beneath the earth nor above, for neither Prester John, who is emperor of upper Ynde, nor the Sultan of Babylon, nor the emperor of Persia compares with him, not in power, not in nobility, not in riches, for in all this he surpasses all earthly princes. Whence it is a great harm that he does not believe firmly in God. And nevertheless he most willingly hears God spoken about, and readily allows there to be Christians who go [and he readily desires that all Christians go well and peacefully] through his entire country; for [in the country over there] no one is prevented from keeping such law as they wish.

Hovering behind this portrait of the Khan—who is open to religious conversation, but not to conversion, and is so powerful that his change of heart could change the world—is the dream of a universal Christendom. Prester John and his land are already Christian, as we shall see, and the Sultan has informed Sir John that Saracens will lose the Holy Land to the reformed Christians. Only the Khan and the Persian emperor remain, so if the Khan were to believe firmly in God, then—but the *Mandeville*-author leaves the implication latent, perhaps because he knew that the dream was unrealizable, or perhaps because in *The Book*'s conclusion, he has Sir John claim that all peoples with reason have some articles of the Faith and acknowledge "Dieu de nature," which in effect brings them within reach of salvation and makes the Christian expansion unnecessary.

Whatever the case, the author gives the dream a final ghostly showing (in the visit to Cathay) in the Tartar ethnography with which *The Book*'s account of the Khan's domain concludes, and this time the passage contains a faint echo of the Sultan's hopeful words to Sir John. Embedded as it is in a catalogue of facts on everything from marital to funeral customs, the dream does not have the same rhetorical force as the criticism, challenges, or consolation in the passages already cited, but it does resonate significantly with the earlier remarks on the Khan's belief, disbelief, and tolerance, as well as with the Sultan's words to Sir John. The echo of the Sultan's words comes from words borrowed from Vincent of Beauvais, but the echo of the passage quoted above represents the *Mandeville*-author's own invention, revealing his penchant both for giving foreign practices a rational motivation and for predicting the demise of foreign empires that would stand in the way of an enlarged Christendom. In Vincent's account, the Tartar's view of their future fate is presented somewhat sceptically, almost as anthropological data:

Aliud quoque statutum habent, quod omnem terram sibi debeant subiugare. . . . Annis 80. debent pugnare, & 18. tantummodo regnare, post hoc vt ipsi dicunt ab alia natione debent vinci, vt vaticinatum est eis, nesciunt tamen quae illa sit. Et qui euadere poterunt, vt dicunt, legem illam tenere debent, quam tenent illi, qui bello eos deuincunt.²⁶

They have another statute too, that they must subject the entire earth. . . . They must fight for 80 years, and rule for only 18; after this, as they say, they are to be conquered by another nation, as their prophecy is, but they do not know which it is. And those who can escape, as they say, must keep the law that those who vanquish them in war keep.

In the *Mandeville*-author's hands, the core of this claim remains, but the assertion is made both vaguer and more precise, in keeping with its new context. The Tartars' legal obligation to expand their empire, for example, becomes a simple desire, perhaps to suggest its foolishness, and the prophecy's temporal precision gives way to a potentially comforting vagueness, while its other elements, particularly those concerning religion, are made specific enough to explain a present practice and raise a future hope (could the prophecy perhaps also recall the English defeat of the French at Crécy and Poitiers?):

Ils ont entencioun de toutz terres mettre a dessouz de eux; et dient qils scieuent bien par prophecies qils serrount vencuz par force darchers et qils se conuertirount a la loy de ceux q' les vengeront. Mes ils ne scieuent quel gent ne quel loy les vengeront, et pur ceo soeffrent ils gentz de toutz loys a demoeror paisiblement en lour terre.²⁷

They intend to place all lands beneath them; and they say that they know well by prophecies that they will be vanquished by force of archers and that they will be converted to the law of those who will vanquish them. But they do not know what people nor what law will vanquish them, and therefore they allow people of all laws to dwell peacefully in their land.

Such is the nature of the *Mandeville*-author's Cathayan utopia: it is a distant domain whose religious freedom stands not as a model for Christians, but as a possible target for their expansion. Even more than in *The Book's* briefer portraits of other eastern realms, then, the author is concerned here to ensure that his account of "choses estranges" in and around the Khan's wonderful and powerful court does not become so diverting as to obscure the question of Latin Christianity's desired place in the world.

Contradicting the Scriptural Connection and Praying for the Khan's Conversion

Whether the earliest readers of the Continental and Insular Versions felt the rhetorical force of the passages discussed above—with their concern to incorporate the Tartars into the One True story and at the same time to criticize, challenge, and console the members of a shrunken and divided fourteenth-century Christendom—is an open question; but in rendering *The Book's* basically naïve celebration of the magnitude, plenitude, power, and order of the Khan's imperial domain, the eight isotopes considered in the present study retain some or all of the text's remarks on the emperor's and his people's relation to God, Christians, and Christianity.²⁸ The Cotton, Egerton, and Velser Versions, for example, make only their typical local changes, transmitting the portrait's essential elements largely intact, as does the lacuna-riddled Defective Version, which however tends to offer shorter versions of the relevant passages. In contrast, the Bodley, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin redactions alter and rearrange the portrait in their own ways: the Bodley Version erases every religious reference but one,²⁹ while the other two versions resist the author's attempt to give the Cathayans a biblical genealogy, and the Latin rendering also insists on their pagan blindness, requesting prayers for the Khan's conversion.

The most curious response to *The Book's* portrait of the Khan and his domain, though, comes in its most unusual isotope, a text previously mentioned only in passing: the fifteenth-century Stanzaic Fragment, which makes religious issues and the dream of Christian expansion its central focus. In the incomplete form in which the 313 lines of this redaction have survived, the reader gets a composite portrait of the Khan based on those sketched by both “[Ser Iohn Mandev]elle” and “Ser Marc [Polo] of Veneese,” the portrait itself being dramatically interrupted by Sir John's colloquy with the Sultan. Significantly, the Fragment opens with *The Book's* remarks on the Khan's unique power, regrettable lack of faith, and notable religious tolerance, followed by a sectarian comment on Christians in Cathay (“But alese, few Cristen men haf theye / but the Grekis and the Nestorianese sect / that of Cristyn fayth hath not tru waye”), and a summary of the *Divisament's* preliminary account of Kublai Khan's request for Christian instruction and the failure of the ensuing mission.³⁰

After a few further (contradictory) comments about the Khan's recognition of Christ as God, his love of “truth and ryghte,” and how Sir John and Polo came to dwell with “this haythen emperour,” the Fragment quickly makes its way into an account of the Khan's title, noting that the two authori-

ties "sumwhat . . . differ abowt his name." The versifier prefers Sir John's "Gret Caane" to Polo's "Gret Cam," "for [Ser Iohan] was a grete clerke and a wyse," and proceeds to restate the Knight's "reson playne" about the title's origins. Ignoring the Noachid ("Cham/Chan") explanation, which would not work here and which thus leaves the Khan outside Christian History, the Fragment narrates a very brief version of "kinge Gvistaane's" ("Changuys's") rise, in order to make the pedestrian claim that "Caane" is passed on as a "syrname." The real point of the tale, though, is the ending of the *Mandeville*-author's telescoped history, with its mention of Hulagu's conquest of the Holy Land on behalf of Christians and its subsequent loss, for this allows the versifier to draw the same conclusion about Christian sinfulness as the Sultan does for Sir John (the redactor conveniently ignores the fact that *The Book's* Hulagu is a Christian; and his use of the term "Turk" for "Saracen" suggests that the redaction dates from the mid-fifteenth century or later): "I trust alle was done by Goddis rede [decision], / that no haythyn suld help vs it to wyn. / Son after Godfray of Bolan bar vp the hede [led the troops] / and the Holy Land wan more and myn [entirely]. / But agayn we lost it for our syn / right sone, and þat was gret pitee. / The Turkis trustis we salte neuer it wyn / als lang ase we thus synfulle be."³¹

This compact (and metrically wretched) conflation of distant but ideologically related parts of *The Book* offers the versifier a way into the Sultan's colloquy with Sir John, after which the Fragment degenerates into a brief compilation that blames the Great Khan and his people for their spiritual blindness, yet still commends them for being "most naturalle wyse," quoting in almost pithy verse the memorable ocular analogy: "We haue two eyn for we ar wise, / and Crystyn men hath bot on e, / for next to vs they ber the pryse. / Alle other men starke blyndid bee." Sorry though it is, the Fragment's interrupted conclusion is of interest for the way in which it reveals a medieval reader unwilling to leave the negative elements of *The Book's* imperial portrait implicit, and in the process exposes its latent contradictions (it may also reveal a fifteenth-century hardening of attitudes toward non-Christians, although such an attitude can already be found in the Vulgate Latin Version, which was probably made between 1396 and 1415). In addition, the Fragment is of interest for the way its focus on the Sultan and the Khan reveals the significant continuities between *The Book's* accounts of the pilgrim's East and the explorer's.

The English prose renderings (except the Bodley Version) likewise maintain *The Book's* ideological continuities. The Egerton Version, though, does contain one significant contrary change: a correction, possibly made by someone other than the redactor, of the genealogical geography through which the *Mandeville*-author appropriates the Tartars to Christian History. In this ver-

sion it is Noah's eldest son, not his cruelest, who gets the largest continent, as the names "Seem" and "Cham" have been written over erasures in the unique manuscript in order to place them according to the orthodox view: "Seem, by cause he was þe eldest broþer, chose þe best party and þe grettest, whilk es toward þe este, and it es called Asy. Cham tuke Affryk. . ."—even though this makes Cham's responsibility for "þe payenes and diuerse maner of men of þe isles of Inde" inexplicable, and leaves the nature of his relation to the Khan uncertain.³²

In contrast, the other most notable change in the Egerton redaction works with the original account, not against it: namely, the displacement of the comments on the Khan's unparalleled power from near the end of the portrait to the middle of Sir John's early authenticating appearance at court. Apart from drawing attention still earlier to the Khan's importance as a world power, the displaced passage has an important function in its new location, since with its assertion that the Khan will "suffer Cristen men [to] dwell in his empire," it legitimates Sir John's investigative military service. Significantly, one of the Cotton translator's few interventions into the Cathayan portrait comes in the same passage (which he does not displace), and it reveals him doing his subtle best to enhance *The Book's* evocation of the dream of Christian expansion. Not only does the Khan here "suffreth wel þat cristene men dwell in his lordschipe"; he also accepts "þat men of his feith ben made cristene men, zif þei wile, þorghout all his contree"—an invitation to missionary activity, if there ever was one.³³

Like these two renderings, Velsler's Version offers a quite accurate reflection of the *Mandeville*-author's portrait of the Cathayan Khanate, although since it contains more changes and some minor misunderstandings, its reflection is somewhat blurrier. In the account of the mechanical birds, for example, the technological knowledge and power of the Cathayans receive less emphasis and the sheer wonder of the thing receives more, while the important ocular analogy is made only in part, blunting its moral force: "They sing and fly, such that I believed it had to do with the devil. But I can certainly say, it is very fine to see and has to do with mastery. Thus it is the finest and most marvelous sport that I have yet seen in the world. And asked about it, they say that the Christians now have one eye, and the others are all blind" ("Die singent und fliegend, das ich es glob, eß gang mit dem tüfel zû. Aber sicher mag ich sprechen, es ist gar schön zesehen und gât es mit maysterschafft zû. So ist es wol das schönest und das wunderlichest spil das ich ye gesach in der welt. Und fraget dar nach, do sprachend sie das die cristen nun habend ain ôg, und die andern sind al blind"). Having missed the point here, Velsler's Version later makes it where the *Mandeville*-author does not: in the account

of Hulagu's conquest of the Holy Land. Whereas the Continental Version has the Ilkhan place the territory in Christian hands, only to have "the whole business go bad" after the Great Khan's death, Velser's rendering (like the unrelated Stanzaic Fragment) here makes explicit reference to the point of Sir John's colloquy with the Sultan: "And at the same time the Great Khan died. And *on account of our sins* the holy grave and land were again lost" ("Und an der selben zyt starb der Groß Cham. Und *von unser sünd wegen* ward das hailig grab und land wyder verlorn").³⁴

If Velser's Version transmits a slightly blurred reflection of the *Mandeville*-author's Cathayan portrait, von Diemeringen's offers quite a thorough repainting of it, rearranging sections and greatly reworking individual passages. One of the most notable changes concerns the Khan's relative power: "The great Can is the greatest lord in the world. And no one is equal to him but Prester John of Ynde, about whom I shall also speak. Prester John equals him in lordship and in power . . ." ("Der groß Can ist der merst here in der welt. Und ist jme nyman glych dan prister Johan von Jndien, von dem ich auch sagen sol. Prister Johans geglichet jme wol an herschafft und an macht . . ."). Instead of being shown as a ruler whose realm is open to missionary activity, then, the Khan is here given a Christian rival. His relationship to God, Christians, and Christianity thus has to emerge in other passages, where we learn that it is much the same as in the Continental and Insular Versions. He is, for instance, still surrounded by numerous Christian physicians, and he still venerates the cross; one manuscript even adds the pointed comment that he "also likes to hear the gospels read. . . . But he does not consider the glosses" ("horet auch die ewangelia gerne lesen. . . . Abir von den glosen enheldet er nicht").³⁵

More striking than this change in the Khan's power, though, is the von Diemeringen Version's pointed resistance to a biblical derivation of the imperial title related to that proposed by the *Mandeville*-author (a second biblical hypothesis is offered, but is neither confirmed nor refuted). Significantly, the counter-argument is here placed not before, but after the more believable account of "Can's" origins in "Cangoiss" or "Cangins," so that it can be introduced in order to be dismissed. Among other things, the German rendering neatly illustrates Friedman's point about the scribally created confusion between Cain and Cham and eerily anticipates an argument later used against hunter-gatherer peoples whenever they got in the way of European expansion and settlement:

Und darumb das in der wyß ritter Can nante, und er auch Can hyß, also heysent noch hut diß tages syn . . . nachkommen der groß Can. Wye wol ettelich meynent, er

hyß Can noch Adams sūn, der Can hyß, der Abel syn bruder erslug, und dar in das lant kam. Und in der wustenung er sych ernerte. Und von jme ist vil ungeschaffenes volck kommen, dye der thyere sytten hant. . . . Jch meynen aber, das sye byllicher Can heysset von dem ersten stam, do sych dye herschafft an gehaben hait also von gottes verhengenyß wan von Can Adams sun. . . . Doch meynet man wol, daz dye von Tartarien und von Sychen und vil lut von Esau synt, dem goit verfluchte. Und darumb ist das lant von Tartarien an viel enden wuste und ungebuwen.³⁶

And because the white knight named him Can, and he was also called Can, his . . . successors are therefore still nowadays called the great Can. Some though hold that he is called Can after Adam's son, who is called Can, who slew Abel his brother, and came there into that land. And he subsisted in the wilderness. And from him have come many deformed people, who have animals' habits. . . . I believe, though, that they are more reasonably called Can from their first branch, when he had taken the empire for himself as by God's judgment, than from Can, Adam's son. . . . But it is thought that those of Tartary and of Scythia and many people are from Esau, whom God cursed. And therefore is the land of Tartary in many parts deserted and unbuilt-up.

It is not von Diemeringen's Cain/Can derivation, but the *Mandeville*-author's own Cham/Chan argument that meets with resistance in the Vulgate Latin Version, which goes even further than the German redaction in rearranging and reworking the portrait of the Cathayan emperor. Endorsing the "Guis Can" (Chingiz Khan) explanation, this version makes the case against *The Book's* biblical genealogy on the basis of orthography, almost as an afterthought: "I had heard in the regions of Jerusalem that he was so called from Noah's son, Cham; but in the land of Cathay I perceived both another and the pure truth of this matter. For as well the two names differ in writing, because Noah's son Cham is written with four elements, of which the last is M, and this Can with only three, of which the last is N" ("Audieram ego in partibus Ierosolymorum hunc esse sic dictum, a filio Noe, Cham: sed in terra Cathay accepi & aliam, & meram huius rei veritatem. Nam & scribendo haec duo nomina habent differentiam, quod filius Noe Cham scribitur quatuor elementis, quorum vltimum est M. & iste Can tribus tantum, quorum vltimum est N").³⁷

Having matter-of-factly resisted the *Mandeville*-author's attempt to incorporate the Tartars into the scheme of Christian History, the Latin redactor also gives a negative turn to most of the religious references, even offering a few pointed criticisms of Tartar beliefs and practices. One such criticism occurs in the account of the marvelous mechanical birds, which this version unexpectedly heightens in ways positive as well as negative, having, for example, the "illusion-maker" ("praestigiator") make the devices "walk, jump, dance, shake, fight, drink, eat, and even sing" ("ire, tripudiare, chorizare, tremere, compugnare, bibere, manducare, sed & cantare"). As in the Conti-

mental and Insular Versions, Sir John finds this show pleasant and wonderful; but unlike the Knight in those two versions, who praises the Cathayans' technological skill, quotes their ocular analogy, and fails to discover how the thing is done, his Latin counterpart first thinks it "fitting to confess in this place [his] own stupidity" ("& me oportet hoc loco fateri stultitiam propriam").³⁸

And here we see why the redactor enhances the spectacle. According to this brief confession, the Knight's stupidity consists in having wanted to learn the secret of the art and having obtained a promise from a "magna Artista" to teach him, although the fellow reneged in the end with the same excuse as in the French versions. In those versions, Sir John is clearly presented as the frustrated *histor*, doing his best to inform his audience, but failing; here, however, his rhetorical function is just the opposite. He is now an exemplar of the danger of worldly curiosity, using himself to direct attention away from the marvel to which he has just devoted an engaging description: "but through this [the broken promise] God preserved me involuntarily from that evil" ("ac per hoc me Deus ab illo malo conseruauit inuitum"). Offering his thanks therefore, the Latin redactor's Knight quotes the Cathayans' memorable ocular analogy, but now so as to reinterpret it while recalling a biblical moment (1 Sam. 11: 2) that does symbolic violence to his hosts:

Certum est illic homines esse subtiles ad quasdam humanas artes, & ingeniosos ad fraudes super omnes, quas noui mundi partes, vnde & inter se dicunt prouerbum, se solos videre duobus oculis, & Christianos vno, caeteros autem homines caecos: *sed mentitur iniquitas sibi, quoniam ipsi vident solo oculo terrena & transitoria, & nos Christiani duobus, quia cum terrenis videmus spiritualia, et mansura*: percussit enim, Naas, id est, humani generis hostis cum illis foedus, vt erueret omnibus oculos dextros, scilicet spirituales.

It is certain that the people there are subtle in specific human arts, and ingenious in the deceptive ones above all the regions of the world that I came to know, whence also among themselves they have a proverb, that they alone see with two eyes, and the Christians with one, while all other people are blind: *but their injustice deceives them, since they see with the terrestrial and transitory eye only, and we Christians with two, because along with earthly things we see spiritual ones, and those that will endure*: indeed Nahash, that is, struck a treaty with those enemies of humankind, that he would pluck out all their right eyes, namely the spiritual eyes.

Remarkable though this passage is, it is neither the most striking nor the most negative comment to be found in the Latin portrait of the Khan's domain, although it is probably the pithiest example of the redactor's resistance to the *Mandeville*-author's strategy of using the East to encourage relativizing reflection. The most remarkable attack on the courtly world celebrated

in the Continental and Insular Versions comes somewhat earlier in the form of a lengthy interpolation in the account of the Khan's four annual festivals. Toward the end of that account, the two French versions mention that animals are paraded before the Khan "to show him reverence; for they say that every living creature [every created thing] ought to obey him and show him reverence" ("pur ly faire reuerence; qar ils dient qe toute creature viue [toute chose cree] doit obeire a ly et ly faire reuerence"). In the Vulgate Latin Version, this claim is refashioned in such a way as to be (even more) offensive to a medieval audience: "they say that all terrestrial creatures owe adoration to the emperor Grand Can, son of the supreme God . . ." ("dicunt omnes terrenas creaturas debere adorationem Imperatori Grand Can filio Dei excelsi . . ."). Thus restated, the observation gives rise to a startling outburst that makes it impossible to read the Latin portrait as a naïve celebration of the Khan's power.³⁹

In effect falling into three parts, the interpolated outburst begins as a kind of homily, in which the apparent celebration of imperial power becomes a negative exemplum of worldly blindness. The homily itself is delivered, one has to assume, by the Latin Version's pious Sir John, although the mode of address here shifts from the first-person singular to the plural, and thus redefines the relationship between speaker and hearers by making them a community that is of one mind on religious matters (the shift is the opposite of the related one in the Continental and Insular exordium): "Let us therefore in this place, I urge, be intent upon how truly the Pagans walk in darkness[,] their mind enwrapped in diabolical darkness" ("Nos igitur intendamus hoc loco quaeso quomodo veraciter Pagani in tenebris ambulant[,] diabolica inuolutione men[te] eorum obtenebrata"). The sign of Tartar darkness, the preacher announces, is their understanding of the emperor's relation to divinity, since it trespasses upon the central tenet of Christianity: "they proclaim him not God, but the son of God, wherein certainly they truly do not know that he is not to be praised, nor adored, but they are not mindful of the other son, the uncreated son of the same [divine] nature, who created both himself and the emperor, alone supremely praiseworthy in the world" ("clamant eum non Deum, sed Dei filium, vbi vtique prorsus ignorant illum non esse laudandum, nec adorandum, sed eum non intendunt alium filium, filium increatum & con-naturalem, qui & ipsos & eum creauit, solum superlaudabilem in secula").⁴⁰

Having broken the marvelous mood of the description with this attack on the Khan's divine right-hand relationship to the Celestial Throne, the textual preacher immediately heads off in the direction implied by his last phrase. No longer vicarious participants in pagan festivals—for the moment at least—the Vulgate Latin audience is now enlisted in a no less vicarious missionary endeavor and treated to the celebration of an entirely different and

familiar imperial power. Instead of the *Mandeville*-author's recurrent image of religious unity in diversity, the redactor here conjures up a picture of unity against diversity; and, as if in response to the author's later claim that no one knows whom God loves or hates, he makes it clear that there can be no salvation outside the Church:

Et hoc alto corde considerantes, laudemus, adoremus, glorificemus & superexaltemus totis viribus Deum, qui nos filios lucis esse voluit, & salutis, nasci, baptizari, educari, erudiri sub sinceritate fidei Christianae, excluso schismate & errore, atque sub instituto sacrosanctae matris Ecclesiae, in qua sola pene ab omni circumferentia orbis terrae fides, quae saluat, & per dilectionem operatur nunc remansit.⁴¹

And considering this with all our heart, let us praise, adore, glorify and supremely exalt God to all men, who wants us to be the sons of light, and of salvation, born, baptized, brought up, educated in the purity of the Christian faith, schism and error excluded, as well as under the governance of the most holy mother Church, in which alone, almost out of the entire circumference of the earth's circle, has now endured the faith which saves, and is served through love.

If salvation "extra ecclesiam" cannot be had, then the Cathayans walking in darkness need to be brought within the fold, and the Latin interpolation addresses itself to precisely that matter, asking for prayers on their behalf. It is an odd moment. Scarcely a few sentences ago the audience had been in the midst of a pagan festival; now they find themselves in effect at mass, hearing the priest requesting intentions for the benighted: "And let us earnestly pray for these Pagans, that they be able to see by the acknowledged light of truth where they walk, that they turn to Jesus Christ, the co-equal son of God, and in him and through him praise and adore the only one true God" ("Et oremus instanter pro ipsis Paganis, vt agnita veritatis luce videre possint quo ambulant, vt perueniant ad Iesum Christum coaequalem Dei filium, atque in ipso, & per ipsum laudare & adorare solum vnum verum Deum").

The redactor's prayer and homily thus ended, the text returns without pause to the Khan's festivals, which, presumably, the audience now regards in a rather different light—although for good measure and poor readers the redactor waits only a few paragraphs before having Sir John confess his mistaken fascination with the celebrations and then decisively reinterpret the ocular analogy in the manner discussed above. Whether or not the Latin intermediary's strategy of double-barreled rhetorical resistance (communal and personal) was effective is impossible to say, but he must have thought it sufficient, since from the reinterpreted analogy on, his counter-discourse works largely through the appropriately negative diction chosen to describe objec-

tionable beliefs and practices. Moreover, he makes no use of a strategy employed in most of his redaction—that of omitting material—and his extensive rearrangements leave in place the *Mandeville*-author's concluding ethnography, with its mention of the Tartars' inventory of highly unChristian sins, the gravest of which (urinating indoors) was punishable by death.

These rearrangements, though, do not allow the ethnography itself to be the last word on the Khan and his domain. Rather, the Latin redactor concludes with a revised version of the lament over the Khan's lack of faith in God, displacing the passage from near the beginning of the portrait until after the westward excursus into territory under the Khan's power. The rhetorical strategy, then, is the opposite of that in the English Stanzaic Fragment and the Bodley Version, where the lament opens the portrait. Significantly, the displaced passage says nothing about the Khan's religious tolerance, mentioning instead his "nobility, power, honour, and dominion" ("nobilitatem, potestatem, reuerentiam, & dominationem"), placing them above those of the Persian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman emperors. In addition, the closing passage quietly echoes the earlier outburst in the depiction of the Khan's festivals by ending with a prayer for his and his people's turn to the Light: "Whence too it is to be much lamented, because he with his entire Empire has not been enlightened by the Catholic faith, nor given new life by the saving immersion: and we pray here that it soon come about, through Jesus Christ our Lord" ("Vnde & multum miserandum est, quia ipse cum toto Imperio nec est fide Catholica illustratus, nec salutari lauachro regeneratus: & hoc oremus vt in breui eueniat, per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum").⁴²

The Power of Christian Obedience, the Threat of Jewish Perfidy

Unlike the Latin redactor, who incorporates the occidental excursus into the tour of Cathay and neatly closes the larger section with a prayer for a mission "ad Tartaros," the *Mandeville*-author ends his contradictory Cathayan portrait with an account, in the brief ethnographic coda, of the selection of a new Khan, and then uses the westward turn to develop the concern with religious expansion in a different way. He does so by taking up two issues that *The Book's* earliest audiences would have considered more urgent than the Khan's conversion, however much they might have wanted to see Cathay turn Christian: the necessity of moral reform to Christian expansion and the "Jewish threat" to Latin Christendom. The first of these comes up in the account of the devout Christians of Georgia, Abkhazia, and Armenia, and recalls the

Sultan's claim that reformed Christians will recover the Holy Land, except that now the prize is said to be world power. The second issue comes up in the account of Gog and Magog, the "Jewish tribes" enclosed in the Caspian Mountains, where one learns about Jewish prophecies that project an anti-Christian world empire at the time of Antichrist.

Both of these ideologically charged passages would have fit better in *The Book's* territorial unfolding had they been placed near the beginning of the itinerary borrowed from Odoric. Since the *Mandeville*-author freely interpolates other material into that part of his underlying source (such as the detour made for the legend of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk), we can assume that their notable (mis-)placement here is deliberate. In any case, it is certain that the significance of each is enhanced by its presentation following the tour of the Khan's immense, recent, and relatively open empire, which they in effect frame by situating it relative to the older Christian story and its expected future. The location of the Gog and Magog story, for instance, suggests that the *Mandeville*-author wants to make the Jews a greater threat than the Tartars, whom many writers saw as allies of Antichrist. In a similar way, the fact that the vision of a Christian world empire comes in the afterglow of the portrait of the Khan's dazzling power must have made the prospect of moral reform seem all the more enticing.

The "displacement" of this ideologically resonant western turn, then, undermines any attempt to read *The Book* as moving in simple linear fashion "from the center of the world to its rim" and at the same time "from a possessive insistence on the core orthodox Christian belief to an open acceptance of many coexisting beliefs."⁴³ It is one of the most striking features of *The Book* that both possessive insistence and open acceptance manifest themselves throughout the text, and that neither supplants the other in the itinerary's roughly eastward movement from Constantinople to Paradise—although since *The Book* closes by asserting that all peoples possessed of reason have some elements of Christian belief, one could argue that it accepts diversity while also repossessing it, such that the world's singular center ultimately and paradoxically contains its divergent rim.

Such all-encompassing possession is certainly part of the point of the first passage, which recounts a "grant meruaille" in the "roialme de Abchaz [Abkhazia]." The legend, borrowed from Hayton's *Flor*, concerns a province that is "all covered in darkness without any light" ("toute couerte de tenebris saunz nul clarite"). As Hayton tells it, the history consists of two not very clearly connected parts. In the first a "cruel empereor" persecutes Christians, ordering them to sacrifice to his idols; some refuse and are martyred, some comply out of fear or love of temporal goods, and some flee into the mountains. In

the second part, the fleeing Christians go among “bons Crestiens” in a nearby country who were themselves in flight to Greece, but the “malveis emperour” finds them and orders them hacked to death; they call on Jesus Christ, “and immediately a great darkness came that blinded the emperor and all his people. The Christians escaped, and the others remained in that darkness, and there they will remain, according to what one believes and recounts, until the end of time” (“e tantost cele grant oscurté vint qui aveugla l’empereor e toute sa gent. Les Crestiens eschaperent, e ceaus demorerent en cele oscurté, e y demorrunt selonc que l’om croit e raconte, jusques à la fin du siecle”).⁴⁴

In retelling this legend, the *Mandeville*-author makes several significant changes. He says nothing of the various Christian responses to the emperor’s command, but paints a portrait of pious unity by referring only to those Christians who left all to flee toward Greece. Fusing Hayton’s bipartite legend into one coherent narrative and increasing its drama and symbolism, the author has the emperor meet the “bons Cristiens” in a valley, where they “kneeled and made their prayer to God [most devoutly]” (“soy mistrent . . . as genoilles et firent lour priere a Dieu [moult deuotement]”). God responds to this show of patient piety in the same way as in Hayton’s account, but the author enhances the description of the emperor’s punishment: the darkness “there lasted so much in such a manner that they could go neither ahead nor back. And thus they all dwell so in this darkness that they shall never after emerge. And the Christians went where they pleased, and their enemies shall remain enclosed and confounded without striking a blow” (“tant y duroit en tiel manere qils ne poaient aler ne auant ne ariere. Et ensy demoerent toutz quoy en celles tenebres qe vnqes puis nent issierout. Et ly Cristiens sen alerent la ou lour plesoit, et lour enemis demorerout conclus et confunduz sanz cop ferir”).⁴⁵

Having told this tale of God’s peaceable conquest of his people’s enemies, the *Mandeville*-author now has Sir John turn preacher and point the appropriate moral, both chastising and challenging Latin Christians in the manner of the Sultan before him:

Nous pooms bien dire, *A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris* [Ps. 118: 23]. Et ceo fust vn grant miracle qe Dieu fist pur eux, si qe y piert. *Pur quoy toutz Cristiens deueroient estre plus deuoutz enuers nostre Seigneur qils ne sount; qar, saunz doute, si ne fust la maluaiste et le peche des Cristiens, ils serroient seignurs de tout le mounde. Qar la banere Ihesu Crist est toutdis dispoie et apparille pur tout aider a ses bons seriantz [amis].*

We can well say, *This was done by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes*. And this was a great miracle that God performed for them, and that appears there. *Wherefore all Chris-*

tians ought to be more devout toward our Lord than they are; for, without a doubt, if there were no evil and sin among Christians, they would be lords of the whole world. For the banner of Jesus Christ is always unfurled and prepared to aid all his good servants [friends].

By way of proving this enticing assertion, the *Mandeville*-author invokes his favorite source, "Dauid . . . en le sautier," citing three separate passages (Deut. 32: 30, and Psalms 91: 7 and 81: 13–14) that show how God will aid the worthy few against the unworthy many: "And so we can see clearly that, if we will be good [serve well, loyally and with a steady heart, in order to be good blessed men], no enemies can last against us" ("Si qe nous poems veoir apertement qe, si nous voilloms estre bons [bien servir, loiaument et de ferme cuer, pour estre bons eureus], nuls enemis ne purroient endurer coudre nous").⁴⁶

The Book has already offered several models of pagan goodness, and it will offer several more before its close, but here, in one of its very few presentations of Christian diversity, it attempts to reinforce its homiletic message with a quick sketch of a model Christian community. Like the accounts of the Jacobite Christians⁴⁷ or the Christians of Prester John's Land, and indeed like those of many pagan peoples, the specular portrait celebrates a simple faith piously practiced. In Georgia, Abkhazia, and Armenia, the text asserts, "are good Christians and very devout" ("sount bons Cristiens et bien deuoutz"), since "they confess and take communion once or twice a week; and there are some who take communion every day. And we over here do not, although St. Paul commanded it, [saying] *I urge taking communion every Lord's day*. They keep this precept [and do well], but we do not [and do not (do well)]" ("ils se confessent et communient toutes les semaines vn foitz ou deux; et si ad plusieurs q' si communient toutz les iours. Et ensy ne faceoms nous mie par de cea, come bien qe seint Paul le comaunde, [en disant] *Omnibus diebus dominicis ad communicandum hortor*. Ils gardent ceo precept [et font bien], mes nous le gardoms mie [ne ne faisons mie]").⁴⁸ Obedience to authority, then, is again celebrated as the mark of goodness, and its practice is made to seem more enticing by the suggestion that even the weakest Christians can have greater strength than anyone.

Sometimes, though, God aids the unworthy and the strong. All that he requires is that they acknowledge their need of him and make their wants consonant with the plan of Christian History. That at any rate is what the legend of Gog and Magog suggests. Interpolated into Odoric's itinerary where he mentions the Caspian mountains, and coming scarcely a page after *The Book's* previous story and its hopeful conclusions, this apocalyptic fantasy takes place in "the mountains of Caspie, which they call Uber [breasts of the north] in the country" ("les montaignes de Caspie, qils appellent Vber [Ubera aquilo-

nis] el pais”), where the “the Jews of the ten tribes are enclosed, who are called Gog and Magog” (“les Iuys de x. lienes sont enclos, qe homme appelle Goth et Magoth”). The *Mandeville*-author tells this story from the persecutor’s viewpoint, reversing the shape of the previous legend in order to make a distinction between good and bad persecution: “King Alexander chased them there between these mountains and thought to have enclosed them through his men’s effort; but when he saw that it would not work out, he beseeched God of nature that he might finish what he had begun. And although he was not worthy to be heard, nevertheless God of his grace closed the mountains together” (“La les chacea ly roi Alisaundres entre celles mountaignes et les quidoit eclore par loueraigne de ses hommes; mes, quant il vist qil ne poet au chief venir, il pria Dieu de nature qil vousist acomplir ceo qil auoit comence. Et, come bien qil ne fust dignes destre oies, nient meinz Dieu de sa grace cloust les mountaignes ensemble”).⁴⁹

The history of Alexander’s divinely sanctioned containment of Gog and Magog was well known in the medieval period, most influentially through the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius, Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum historiale*, and the Alexander romances; but the *Mandeville*-author’s idiosyncratic retelling of it belongs to a “rare and late” version, and it attempts, in the fashion of *The Book* generally, to syncretize variant traditions.⁵⁰ Significantly, the *Mandeville*-author ignores the common tradition linking Gog and Magog with the Tartars—who, like the Saracens are mostly depicted in a positive light, despite the negative tenor of the author’s principal source after Odoric, Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum historiale*.⁵¹ Instead, as we have seen, the author prefers the rare anti-Jewish tradition, which he may have known through the *Compendium theologicæ veritatis* compiled by Hugh Ripelin of Strassburg (d. 1268), since it has several unusual details in common with *The Book*’s account (including the Amazon queen’s curious role):

Gog et Magog, decem tribus ultra montes Caspios clausae, tamen ita quod bene possent exire si permitterentur, sed non permittuntur a regina Amazonum, sub cuius regno et ditone vivunt. Has dicunt Judei in fine saeculi exituras et venturas in Hierusalem et cum suo Messya ecclesiam exstructuras. Alii dicunt, quod per Gog et Magog intellegitur exercitus Antichristi, qui in fine saeculi veniet ecclesiam expugnare.⁵²

Gog and Magog, the ten tribes enclosed beyond the Caspian mountains, could nevertheless all indeed come out if they were allowed to, but they are not allowed to by the queen of the Amazons, under whose rule and order they live. The Jews say that at the end of time they will emerge and go to Jerusalem and with their Messiah build the temple. Others say that Gog and Magog are to be understood as the army of Antichrist, who at the end of time will come to conquer the church.

The narrative possibilities and ideological implications of this passage would have been obvious to the *Mandeville*-author, for whom neither the Tartars nor the Saracens, but the Jews are the enemy par excellence. As we have seen, the Jews have been shown negatively in their few appearances in *The Book* so far, first being depicted as the original Christian enemies (crucifying Jesus and hiding the cross), and later as an internal threat to Latin Christendom, in an anecdote that alludes to the claim that they were responsible for the Black Death: "The Jews sent one of their friends [The Jews one of these years sent] in search of this poison to poison all Christendom, just as I have heard them say in their confession at death; but, God be thanked, they failed in their design, but nevertheless they caused great mortality" ("De celle venim les Iuys auoient enuoiez quere vn de ses amiz [vn de ces ans] pur empoisonner tote Cristiente, si come ieo lour ay oy dire en lour confessioun a la mort; mes, Dieu graciez, ils faillèrent a lour purpos, mes totefoitz ils firent grande mortalitee").⁵³ In the present case, the *Mandeville*-author again makes use of a conspiracy theory, the difference being that he now projects the Jewish threat into the future and legitimates the theory by linking it with the well-known and influential story of the enclosed nations. If, then, as I suggested above, the text's unexpected westward turn in the movement from Cathay to Prester John's Land serves to situate the Khan's powerful new domain in relation to an older History, it also serves to neutralize the formerly threatening Tartars by setting up a once and future enemy in their place.

In filling out the narrative implicit in Hugh's remarks, the *Mandeville*-author not only attempts to give it a certain verisimilitude, as he does in expanding most stories; he also gives it an especially ominous cast by noting that "ascuns de ces Iuys" sometimes escape. Such escapees have to be accounted for, and the author allows his imagination free rein here, elaborating the earlier statement about language and another about the Jews lacking their own land outside the enclosure. The result purports to discuss the future, but it actually works to incite ill-feeling against the Jews in the present:

Et, come bien qe ascuns issent ascun foitz, ils ne scieuent [nul] langage forsqe Ebreu, si ne scieuent parler as gentz. Et nient pur tant lem dit qils isserount fors en temps de Antecrist et ferrount grant occisioun des Cristiens. Et pur ceo toutz les Iuys qi demorerent par toutes terres apprennent toutdis a parler Ebreu sour celle esperance qe, quant cils des mountaignes de Caspie isserount fors, qe ly autres Iuys sachent parler a eux [et les conduire en Cristienteas pur Cristiens destruire] [Et de ce langage ilz entroduisent leurs enfans pour crestiente destruire]. Qar les autres Iuys dient qils scieuent bien par lour prophecies qe cils de Caspie isserount et sespanderoient parmy le mounde et qe vngore serront Cristiens en lour subieccioun atant et plus qils ont este en subieccioun des Cristiens.⁵⁴

And although some have sometimes emerged, they know no language but Hebrew, and they cannot speak to people. And despite this it is said that they will issue forth in the time of Antichrist and commit a great massacre of the Christians. And therefore all the Jews who live in all lands always learn to speak Hebrew in the hope that when those of the mountains of Caspie issue forth, the other Jews will know how to talk to them [and lead them into Christendom in order to destroy Christians] [And they introduce that language to their children in order to destroy Christendom]. For the other Jews say that they know well by their prophecies that those of Caspie will emerge and spread out through the world and that Christians will yet be in as much and more subjection to them than they have been in subjection to the Christians.

Here, certainly, is a conspiracy theory that outdoes even the earlier story of the plot to poison Christendom, and not simply in the greater extent of its matter-of-fact paranoia. As the only apparently relativizing statement at the very end might suggest—since in context it cannot be viewed as a critical reflection on the Christian treatment of the Jews—several elements of this story invert or negatively parody those of other accounts in *The Book*, and so reaffirm the claims of those other accounts in the way that Satan's manner of ruling in Hell parodies and reaffirms God's rule in Heaven. The Jews have no land, for example, but want the world, whereas the Christians have much, but not the crucial center. Jewish fidelity to one another is conspiratorial, whereas that of other peoples is a virtue reflecting on Christian selfishness. Jews who travel remain eternal outsiders, whereas Christians (like Sir John) enter into mutually illuminating contact with other peoples. Jewish prophecies announce their own ultimate triumph, whereas those of others either look ahead to their demise (as with the Tartars) or to the re-expansion of a reformed Christianity (as with the Saracens).

There is a similar sort of negative parody in the conclusion which the *Mandeville*-author has Sir John give to the account, where the Jews' experience of wonder before a natural object results in destruction rather than in the appreciation usually celebrated in *The Book*. Relating what he has heard about how the confined Jews will finally escape, the English Knight explains that they will one day see a fox that has dug its way in under Alexander's gate and, struck with wonder, they will pursue it, find its den, and dig their own way out. Although it has the air of folktale about it, this explanation probably derives from a brief mid-thirteenth-century Latin treatise entitled *Mirabilia mundi*, whose version of the legend has several unmistakable points of contact with *The Book*'s.⁵⁵

At the same time, though, the *Mandeville*-author's account differs in several obvious ways, and the differences are no less significant than the affinities, for they reveal the author overwriting the borrowed material to his

own rhetorical and ideological purposes. In the *Mirabilia*, for example, Gog and Magog are explicitly equated with the Tartars (and possibly with those Tartars converted to Islam), an equation never made in *The Book*: "The kings and nobles are of the race of Ishmael, who are called *the Tartars of Gog and Magog*" ("Reges autem et maiores sunt de genere Ysmahelis, qui dicuntur *Tartari de Gog et Magog*").⁵⁶ In addition, the prophecy of escape in the *Mirabilia*'s legend has *already* been *fulfilled*, since the escaped destroyers are the Tartars who banged so violently on Christendom's eastern door in the thirteenth century, and who are represented there in their familiar allegorical role as a scourge sent by God on account of the sinful state of Christendom. The *Mandeville*-author here ignores this "Self"-critical element, which would not have been out of place in *The Book*, and ends his account with the projected escape, thus leaving his audience to associate the Jews with the fox: that is, with a powerful figure of cunning, deceit, and destruction (cf. Nehemiah 4: 3), and sometimes also of heresy (the Cathars, for example, were identified with "the little foxes" of the Song of Songs 2: 15).⁵⁷

Such, then, is the ominous and potentially allegorical conclusion to Sir John's hearsay anecdote, as well as to *The Book*'s larger "historical" account of "the Jews of the ten tribes." It is a strange ending to an even stranger mélange of elements drawn from a variety of traditions, but it is also a dramatic one, breaking off with the escape rather than with its consequences, and drawing attention to the most significant parodic inversion in the entire passage: the inversion of Christian History in the Jews' destructive escape. Whereas Adam and Eve in the beginning were expelled by God from the Paradise to which their Christian descendents now desire to return, the Jews in antiquity were locked up with God's help and their descendents want to escape from their anti-Paradise—an escape that, ironically, will herald the triumphant Christian return to their origins, and that, like the original departure, will be brought about by means of a cunning beast.

Diminishing the Power of Christian Piety, Retaining the Jewish Threat

Unlike this fantastic story about the threatening force of the landless and powerless Jews, the legend of the Christians saved by darkness would have been relatively unknown to *The Book*'s audience, as would the good reputation of the Christians in the Black Sea region. Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps because the *Mandeville*-author's insistence on the link between power and piety did not sit well with some of his intermediaries, most of *The Book*'s

isotopes significantly alter elements of this first part of its late westward turn. In fact, only the Cotton and Egerton Versions retain the entire larger passage, altering nothing more than minor details, while the Bodley Version, in contrast, omits everything.⁵⁸ Between these two extremes lie the von Diemeringen Version, which lacks Sir John's claim about the absolute power of Christian piety; the Defective and Vulgate Latin Versions, which omit both the pseudo-prophetic claim and the subsequent praise of the local Christians' practice of frequent confession and communion; and the Velser Version, which recounts the miracle in perfunctory fashion, reduces the claim to an exhortation to greater devotion, and omits the praise of obedient piety.

The un-utopian nature of the important occidental excursus in *The Book's* isotopes is well illustrated in the quite different conclusions that the Velser and Vulgate Latin Versions give to the Abkhazian miracle. Of the two, Velser's rendering is closer to the *Mandeville*-author's, but it is considerably toned down, urging moral improvement rather than sinlessness and radically weakening the worldly power of piety: "and about this they could well say: 'This was done by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes'. That is a great marvel, *wherefore all Christian men ought generally to be all the more pious*, because we well see that our lord's banner is always ready to protect us" ("und da von möchtend sie wol sprechen: 'A domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris'. Das ist ain groß wunder, *dar umb sôltend billich all cristen dester andachtiger sin*; wann wir wol senhent das unsers herren baner all weg beraitt ist uns zebeschirment"). In contrast to Velser, the Latin redactor follows his habit of focusing on doctrine and making *The Book's* claims sound more orthodox. Thus, the miracle here reveals nothing about what sinless Christians would achieve in the world, and Scripture is cited in the proper way, as God is shown dividing the Christian sheep from the pagan goats:

Et deus, qui [pro] puro corde Christianos ad se orantes semper exaudit, expleuit illic literam vaticinij Isaiae: quia ecce tenebrae operient terram & caligo populos, monstrans per tenebram terrenam, quam eis superduxit, quas passuri essent inimici nominis Christi tenebras infernales, indicansque per temporalem vitam, quam sibi fidelibus conseruauit, eam quam possessuri sunt viri Christiani vitam perpetuam, & coelestem.⁵⁹

And God, who always heeds the Christians praying to him with [for] a pure heart, there fulfilled the letter of the prophet Isaiah: "for lo the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people," revealing through the terrestrial darkness that he drew over them, that the enemies of Christ's name are to suffer infernal darkness, and showing through temporal life, which he has preserved for those faithful to him, that Christian men are to have perpetual and heavenly life.

Despite the fierceness of the Vulgate Latin Version's orthodoxy both here and elsewhere, the redactor does not follow the *Mandeville*-author in making the Jews "the enemies of Christ's name" par excellence. In fact, apart from the Bodley Version, which omits the legend of Gog and Magog, the Latin rendering is the only isotope to resist or adapt the passage to such an extent that it ceases to be a recognizable variation on the *Mandeville*-author's idiosyncratic telling of it: what remains is no more than a statement that the Jews of the ten tribes (there is no mention of Gog and Magog) are enclosed in the Caspian mountains "through God's will" ("per Dei voluntatem"), the way out being guarded by the Amazon queen.⁶⁰ The general lack of resistance to this bizarre legend as a whole may be a consequence of its having been widely known, since few of *The Book's* isotopes share the almost paranoid anti-Jewishness of the Continental and Insular Versions, whether here or in other accounts: the Bodley, Defective, Metrical, Velser, and Vulgate Latin Versions, for example, all omit the earlier story of the plot to poison Christendom,⁶¹ and the Metrical, Velser, and von Diemeringen Versions make no reference to the linguistic conspiracy theory in the Gog and Magog legend.

In contrast to the Latin and Bodley redactions, the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions retain the apocalyptic legend almost verbatim. This is especially striking in the Defective Version, whose text is typically riddled with small lacunae; indeed, the only absent element is Alexander's unworthiness to be heard by God—a claim that the other two translations explain by adding that he was a "payneme" (Cotton) or a "haythen" (Egerton): "And, if all he ware a haythen man, Godd of his speciall grace herd his praier." Beyond this, the Egerton Version alone makes any real, if still minor, changes to the *Mandeville*-author's account, the most significant of which concern the Jewish prophecy of escape. Thus, the redactor distances Sir John from the claim itself by translating "lem dit" as "men in þe cuntree þare nere saise," and he slightly tones the passage down by rendering "ferrount grant occisioun des Cristiens" ("they will commit a great massacre of the Christians") as "þir Iewes schall . . . do mykill harme to Cristen men."⁶²

The one remaining English redaction—the Metrical Version—tones this passage down still further, transforming the story into a kind of pious romance. Both Antichrist and the Hebrew language conspiracy disappear from this almost sentimental version, which also makes the fox story a part of the Jews' own prophecy, and has the enclosed nations escape *in order to convert the world to Judaism*, their ultimate design being justified by John 10: 16, of all things: "*Et fiet vnum ovile et vnus pastor* [And there shall be one sheepfold and one shepherd]." No less striking than this picture of the Jews inspired to missionary activity by a Christian text is the Metrical Version's portrait of Alex-

ander's prayer to God, where the pagan hero is anything but unworthy to be heard: "Vppon his knees he sette hym down / Hertelich with good deuocioun / And praied God with alle his myzte / And to gret penaunce he hym hize [promised]. / So þat he wolde sende hym myght and grace / That thei shulde neuer passe that place."⁶³

Alexander is not quite so pious in Velser's Version, although he is no longer unworthy either, and the resulting moderate picture is typical of the entire account here. The Jewish linguistic conspiracy, for example, receives no mention—the most significant change that could have been made to the *Mandeville*-author's account—although their prophecies that they will eventually subject the Christians do get noticed. As usual, most of Velser's adaptations are fairly small, but it is worth noting that he attempts to authenticate the legend by alluding to other writings in mentioning Alexander's answered prayer: "as one can find written how it happened" ("als man wol geschriben vindet wie es zû gieng").⁶⁴

There is perhaps a greater trace of unease in von Diemeringen's Version, whose opening words place the entire account in the realm of opinion: "it is thought" ("man meynet"). In addition, the translator appears to have felt obliged to explain why Alexander confined only ten of the twelve Jewish tribes: "there were twelve tribes until Alexander's time. . . . And the other two tribes were loyal to him" ("dye tribus werent bitz Allexanders gezitten zwolf. . . . Und dye andern zwey tribus warent jme holt"). Among the many other changes in von Diemeringen's rendering, the most significant is the omission, as in the Metrical and Velser Versions, of the linguistic conspiracy theory, a modification which removes some of the harshness of the original account. Unlike those two redactions, however, von Diemeringen's Version compensates for the omission by calling the confined Jews "bose," or "wicked"—only to distinguish them from their counterparts in Christendom, who in prophesying the ten tribes' eventual emergence are credited with a certain authority, just as their language is seen in a new light: "And the Jews who are among us and who have a great mastery of their scripture believe that they will still perhaps emerge" ("Und meynent dye juden, dye bye unß synt, und dye grossen meyster in ir geschriff haltent, sye sollent noch etwan erruße kommen").⁶⁵

Not all copies of the von Diemeringen Version make this distinction, though, since at least one describes the prophecy in an entirely different fashion: "And the same wicked Jews say that if they emerged, they would destroy the whole world" ("Und dieselben bosen juden sprechen, quemen sy heruss, sy wolden alle die werlt virderbent"). This particular copy, moreover, calls the confined Jews not the "decem tribus," but "the red Jews" ("die roden juden")—which is still another variant of the Gog and Magog legend.⁶⁶ The

significance of this change is that it associates the enclosed Jews with Judas, who was typically represented with red hair, and reveals that just as some readers resisted the *Mandeville*-author's harsh anti-Jewishness, others found ways of adapting *The Book*'s idiosyncratically negative portraits of the Jews to established traditions.

Imperial Splendor and Apostolic Simplicity: Prester John's Christian Kingdom

In keeping with the focus on questions of faith and power during this long stretch of *The Book*'s eastern tour, the *Mandeville*-author returns from his excursive depiction of dispersed religious power to present an account of an imperial ruler who resembles the Khan in greatness, but differs significantly from him in his relation to Christianity. Like the Cathayan emperor, Prester John was a fairly new figure in the medieval image of the East, having made his debut in the late twelfth century, not quite a hundred years before the Khan. Yet unlike the latter, Prester John appears to have had only a textual existence, having come into being through the famous *Littera*. In certain respects, this ontological difference was of no consequence, since for most medieval people the East as a whole existed only in textual form, and they had no way of distinguishing what was really there from what was not—indeed, even genuine travelers sometimes had this difficulty, and acquired information about things that they could not personally confirm, but passed on anyway. What is significant about Prester John's case, though, and what differentiates it from the Khan's, is that those travelers who left written records of the East have little to say about him or his realm beyond mentioning them. John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, Jordan of Séverac, and Odoric, among others, name the emperor, but only Friar Jordan puts any stock in the received account, and he does so simply by alluding to it. In fact, the most loquacious of those whose accounts predate *The Book* is Polo, and his scattered remarks are somewhat idiosyncratic.⁶⁷

More even than Polo's *Divisament*, *The Book* stands apart from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century travel and geographical writings in reporting at length on Prester John and his land (although it will soon be outdone by Johannes Witte de Hese's *Itinerarius*); and it differs radically from its textual template, Odoric's *Relatio*, which devotes only a couple of sentences to the subject, because "it is not the hundredth part of what is said about how it is a rich land and a noble country" ("il n'en est mie la centisme part de ce que on dit comment que soit riche terre et noble pais").⁶⁸ As if in response to the

friar's comment, it is the emperor's country itself with which the *Mandeville*-author's depiction starts, a counter-gesture that recalls his placement of the brief catalogue of monsters precisely where Odoric declines to relate any more marvels. The account as a whole runs to about seven pages as printed in the Continental Version, and so is longer than the earlier catalogue, but still only about a third as long as the depiction of Cathay, and it differs from the latter in other aspects as well. It pays somewhat more attention to natural marvels, for instance, and none at all to the realm's history or customs and manners beyond the court, while the glittering lapidary appearance of the court itself receives more space than what people do there. Thus, whereas the portrait of the Khan's realm has at times the air of a historical romance, the depiction of Prester John's world feels more like a marvelous set piece, in the manner of a dream vision of the otherworld.

In addition to the differences of emphasis, the account of Prester John's realm is arranged in ways both better and worse than the not particularly tidy depiction of the Khan's realm. Whereas the middle of it appears to have been put together almost at random, its beginning and latter parts are placed where they clearly serve specific aims—and there is even a kind of coda located later in the text that is likewise placed to serve a definite purpose. Toward the close of portrait, and in the distant coda, these aims are mainly ideological, as the text conjures up a glittering (if hazy) vision of an ideal realm in which the spiritual and the temporal powers are one, while in the opening section the aims are mainly rhetorical, as the text sets up a contrast between Prester John's realm and the Khan's and brings Sir John onstage to authenticate what follows.

The territory held by “Prestre Iohan, ly grant emperour de Ynde,” according to this introduction, is extensive and rich, but it is “not so rich as that of the Great Khan” (“mes noun pas si riches come ly de Grant Chan”) because of its relative isolation—its proto-utopian insularity—and the difficulties of getting there: “For the merchants do not come there so commonly to buy goods as they do in the land of the Great Khan, for it is too far” (“Qar ly marchantz ne vont mie la si comunement pur achater marchandizis, come ils font en la terre de Grant Chan, qar il est trop loinz”).⁶⁹ The only place farther than Prester John's Land, in fact, or harder to get to, is Paradise, the One True Utopia, and Sir John does not attempt the dangerous way there, as we shall see. Having done so here, though, he can present himself as overgoing even Marco Polo, and this makes him a kind of eastern Ulysses, venturing where few travelers dared go so as to acquire knowledge not only of marvels, but also of powerful Christian simplicity in imperial splendor.

Compared with the account of Cathay, the description that follows here

is somewhat disappointing, especially in its initial observations. These are an indiscriminate mix of material about Prester John, precious stones and other marvels, his realm, and his and his people's Christian faith, this last subject being the most important. From faith, the text moves on to a brief inventory of natural marvels, and then returns to the emperor's realm, describing first his way of riding into battle or in private, then his two palaces, and finally the state of his court; these mostly ethnographic elements form a more coherent account, particularly on the subject of religion. Most of this material comes, of course, from the *Littera*, but a few details derive from elsewhere, the most significant of which is reworked from Odoric. According to the friar, Prester John always marries the Khan's daughter, but in *The Book* this alliance goes both ways, in keeping with the *Mandeville*-author's habit of establishing symmetrical relations between the Christian and the non-Christian: "This emperor Prester John always takes the Great Chan's daughter as a wife; and the Great Chan, Prester John's daughter as well" ("Cis emperers Prestre Iohan prent toutdis la fille au Grant Chan a femme; et ly Grant Chan auxi la fille Prestre Iohan").⁷⁰

Prester John's Christianity becomes the principal focus as the account moves toward its close. The observations made here confirm and expand the brief remarks made prior to the description of the realm's marvels, remarks that echo *The Book*'s earlier depictions of certain pagan communities, such as those of the Amazons or the Canophales, whose lack of the whole truth does not prevent them from being almost ideal:

Cis emperers Prestre Iohan est Cristien et grant partie de soun pais auxi; mes toutfoitz ils nount mie de toutz les articles de ly ley [les xii. articles de la foy], si come nous auoms. Ils croient bien en le Piere et le Fils et le Seint Espirit; et sount moltz deuoutz et bien loialx les vns as autres, et nont cure de barrat, ne de cauteles, ne de fraudes nulles.⁷¹

This emperor Prester John is Christian and a large part of his country also; but nevertheless they do not have all the articles of the law [the twelve articles of the faith], such as we have. They believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and they are very devout and faithful to one another, and do not care for fraud, nor for tricks, nor for any deceptions.

As a result of the echoes just noted, the *Mandeville*-author's borrowings from the *Littera* on the subject of religion have a thematic and ideological resonance that they lack in the original. This greater semantic resonance can be seen very nicely in the passage that marks the account's return to the subject of Prester John's faith: the description of his manner of riding into battle behind thirteen ornate crosses. After the exordium's critique of the ruling

estate for pursuing private rather than Christian military interests, after the celebration of the cross in the visit to Constantinople, and after the claim in the western excursus that Jesus will always aid his servants against their enemies, the present passage can hardly be read as anything but an exemplum of proper Christian warfare—a reading strengthened if we compare the passage with its source, which presents the relation of the troops to the crosses slightly differently. In the *Littera*, Prester John's troops are arrayed so that they follow the crosses ("and ten thousand soldiers *follow each one of them*"; "*unamquamque ipsarum secuntur X milia militum*"). In *The Book*, though, the soldiers are deployed so as to defend them: "And *to protect each* there are ten thousand men of arms . . . in the manner in which one protects the standard in these parts, when there is warfare" ("Et *pur garder chescun* y a x. mil hommes darmes . . . par la manere qe homme garde le estandard en cestes parties, quant homme guerroe").⁷²

Against this celebration of splendid Christian warfare is set an almost ascetic sketch of Prester John's peaceful rides, when he has displayed only a plain wooden cross along with two vessels symbolizing his power and mortality. This contrasting sketch also comes from the *Littera*, and again the *Mandeville*-author subtly changes the representation of the cross, the change here drawing greater attention to the reality it commemorates. Where the *Littera* says rather abstractly that the humbler practice is followed "so that we might always be mindful of the passion of our lord Jesus Christ" ("ut semper simus memores passionis domini nostri Iesu Christi"), *The Book* notes that it is followed "in memory [of the fact] that Jesus Christ suffered death on a cross of wood" ("en remembrance qe Ihesu Crist suffri mort en vn crois de fust").⁷³

This dialectic of pomp and simplicity recurs in Prester John's domestic life, and is seen most clearly in his sexual behavior:⁷⁴

Littera. Lectus noster est de saphiro *propter virtutem castitatis*. Mulieres speciosissimas habemus, sed non accedunt ad nos nisi causa procreandorum *filiorum* quater in anno, et *sic a nobis sanctificatae ut Bersabee a David*, redit unaquaeque ad locum suum.

The Book. La fourme de soun lit est de fin saphirs bendez dor pur ly faire bien dormir et *pur sa luxurie refrener* [refroider]; qar y ne voet coucher ouesque *ses femmes* qe iiij. foitz en lan solonc les iiij. saisons, et cest soulement pur *enfantz* engendrer.

Our bed is of sapphire for *its power of chastity*. We have *the most beautiful women*, but they do not come to us except for the purpose of procreating *sons* four times in the year, and *thus sanctified by us, like Bathsheba by David*, each returns to her place.

The form of his bed is of fine sapphires set in gold to make him sleep well and *to restrain [cool] his lust*; for he will not sleep with *his wives* except four times in the year *according to the four seasons*, and that is only to make *children*.

The two accounts could not be more different, given that they depict almost the same thing. In the *Littera*, the description works against itself and is hard not to read as ironic, in that Prester John is depicted as the chaste possessor of an erotic paradise, a lustless David whose rarely satisfied desires, governed by the "virtue" of a precious stone, sanctify his harem of Bathshebas. The picture in *The Book* is just the opposite. Gone is the ambiguous, even blasphemous allusion to the union of David and Bathsheba; gone too are the outstanding beauties, replaced by "wives," while in the one negative, almost clerical note, the "power of chastity" becomes the "restraint" (or "cooling") of "lust." The most striking change, though, is the claim that the emperor's attempts at procreation are tied to the seasons, since this is to "naturalize" the regulated sexual activity, to place it under natural law. Seen thus, the emperor's ascetic behavior has links with several "natural" practices depicted in *The Book*, from the "primitiue et naturelle" confession of the Jacobite Christians to the procreative communism of the "Lamorians," while the seasonally regulated sexual continence connects his exemplary realm with Amazonia, with which it also shares the virtue of military discipline.

As if to emphasize the consequences of incontinence without having Sir John ascend the pulpit, the *Mandeville*-author follows his depiction of Prester John's realm with a tale of senseless sensuality and military misdiscipline. The borrowed story relates the rise and justified fall of a "riche homme" (Odoric's "senex de monte," or "Vieillart des Montaignes") who founded a fortified noble retreat called "Paradise" from which he dispatched hired killers. In the *Relatio*, the story is told just before the friar concludes his memoirs, but in *The Book* it is brought forward and becomes a cautionary erotic tale in a dialogic relation to the preceding portrait. Enhancing Odoric's description of the mountain Paradise, the author recounts how young men are tricked into becoming assassins by being shown the sensual *locus amoenus*, to which it is promised they will go if they die for love of the rich man. The appeal of this Paradise is not only that in it the men will enjoy sexual pleasures with "demoiselles" and always remain virgins ("toutdis . . . pucels"), but also that it represents a way toward spiritual bliss: "afterwards he [the rich man] will place them again in a Paradise more beautiful still, where they will clearly see God of nature in his majesty and in his glory" ("apres il [le riche homme] les mettroit vncqore en vn plus beal Paradys assez, ou ils verroient visiblement Dieu de nature en sa maieste et en sa gloire"). In Odoric's historically quite accurate account, the Tartars learn of the Old Man's exploits and quickly destroy him and his stronghold alike. In *The Book*, though, the ending takes a more exemplary form, focusing on the destruction of the malignant bower of bliss, as other rich men do away with their vicious adversary, leaving the ruined Paradise as a memorial to his misguided lusts: "The site of the fountains still

exists and of other things and the walls, but the riches do not remain" ("Ly lieu est vncqore des fountaignes et des ascuns autres choses et les murailles, mes les richesses ne sount mie demoeres").⁷⁵

Clearly, both the idea and the rewards of service and devotion take quite different forms in Prester John's Land, where the emperor's chastity is the rule, and everyone eats only one meal a day. Thus, whereas the "grant seignours" in the rich man's country are murdered as rivals, the seventy-two kings in the emperor's realm are received at court, seven at a time, for a month each, so that they can serve him alongside the many dukes and counts. Also at court are twenty archbishops and twenty bishops, along with the patriarch of St. Thomas, who, according to a detail added by the *Mandeville*-author, is "as if the pope" ("auxi come papes"). This telling detail apart, the description here comes from the *Littera*, which concludes by linking the account of courtly service with an explanation of the emperor's title (the royal "we" sitting uneasily with the professed humility): "Why our sublimity allows ourself to be called by no worthier name than priest ought not to amaze your prudence" ("Quare sublimitas nostra digniori quam presbiteratus nomine nuncupari se non permittat, non debet prudentia tua admirari"). The reason is that others at court already occupy higher divine offices ("our butler [is] an archbishop"; "pincerna noster [est] archiepiscopus"), thus leaving the highest power with the lowest ecclesiastical role: "And therefore our highness does not allow ourself to be called by these names or to be distinguished by those titles with which our court appears to be full, and so we have better chosen to be called by a lesser name and a lower rank because of our humility" ("Et icirco altitudo nostra non est passa se nominari eisdem nominibus aut ipsis ordinibus insigniri, quibus curia nostra plena esse videtur, et ideo minori nomine et inferiori gradu propter humilitatem magis elegit nuncupari").⁷⁶

From this haughtily humble explanation, the *Mandeville*-author takes several details for his portrait of the court's splendid simplicity. Ignoring for now the account of the emperor's title, he focuses on the blurring of the boundaries between court and church, presenting them more appropriately in a rhetorically simpler manner: "the archbishops and the bishops and the abbots are all kings in that country [palace]. And each of these great lords knows how he is supposed to serve. One is master of the house, another is chamberlain. . . . And thus [like a king] he is nobly served" ("ly erceuesques et ly euesques et ly abbes sont toutz rois en celle pais [palais]. Et de ces grantz seignurs chescuns sciet de quoy il doit servir. Ly vn est maistre de hostel, lautre chaumberlain. . . . Et ensy [comme roys] est il molt noblement seruiz").⁷⁷ In Prester John's Christian kingdom, then, the spiritual and the temporal powers are one, since the religious authorities are also political rulers, and all of them

humbly serve a single, faithful, chaste, and powerful emperor who defends his interests under the fine cruciform banner of Jesus Christ, but otherwise goes about with a plain wooden cross.

The rhetorical calculation and ideological naïveté in this idealizing emphasis on imperial simplicity and the interpenetration of church and state power reveal themselves even more clearly in the distant coda to the present portrait. Only a short page after *The Book's* description of Alexander the Great's instructive encounter with ascetics in the "Terre de Foy," one of the many isles in Prester John's Ynde, the text returns to a matter untouched in the main account of the emperor, although it is raised in the part of the *Littera* from which the *Mandeville*-author takes the passage on service quoted above: Prester John's title. As in the explanation of the Khan's title, the point of the present anecdote is to bring the Yndian emperor within the scheme of Christian History.

"There was once an emperor" ("Il estoit vn emperour iadis"), the passage begins, and the word "iadis" signals that it is to be read as an exemplum. In this account, the emperor has some "chiualers Cristiens" in his retinue, and so wants to know how the Christian service is held. To satisfy his desire, he goes "with a Christian knight [a small company] to a church in Egypt; and that was one [the next] Saturday after Pentecost, when the bishop [of Alexandria] was performing the ordinations" ("ouesqes vn chiualer Cristien [a pou de compaignie] en vn esglise Degipte; et fust vn samady [le samedy prouchain] apres Pentecost, qe leuesqe [dalixandre] fesoit les ordres"). This scene gets a certain verisimilitude from its otherwise pointlessly precise date, but the scene's function is not really to locate the event in time; it is to offer another instance of the reciprocity between East and West while keeping alive the dream of an expanded Christendom. Not only does the enquiring emperor here resemble Sir John, who is seeking similar knowledge beyond the Holy Land, but his decision to go to Egypt (in the manner of a pilgrim) is explained by a "historical" remark whose resonance is ideological, bringing the concerns of *The Book's* first parts into its tour of the farthest East: "for at that time Christendom extended beyond the sea. All Turkey, Armenia, Syria, [Tartary], Jerusalem, [Palestine], Arabia, Aleppo, and all the land of Egypt were all Christian" ("car adont duroit crestiente de la la mer. Toute Turquie, Armenie, Surie, [Tartarie], Iherhosolimye, [Palestine], Arrabe, Halape, et toute la terre de Egypte estoient tous crestiens").⁷⁸

In this once gloriously extended Christendom the emperor sees an ordination ceremony that prompts him to ask about those for whom the bishop "performed many solemnities" ("taunt dez mistiers affaire"). Being told that they are priests, he responds by aspiring to their title, as though it were wor-

thier than any political designation: “And he said he no longer wanted to be called king or emperor, but priest; and he wanted to have the name of the first to come out, who had the name John. And ever since he has been called Prester John [in his land and in his country]” (“Et il dit qil ne voloit plus estre roy ne emperers appelez, mes prestres; et voloit auoir le noun du primere qi isseroit fors, le quel eust a noun Iohan. Si ad toutdis depuis este appellees Prestre Iohan [en sa terre et en sa contree]”). Where the ruler goes, his subjects follow, and with the next sentence Prester John’s land is full of converts. In a sense, then, this initiation scene harks back to the remarks on the Khan’s religious tolerance and the existence of crypto-Christian converts in his realm, suggesting the Cathayan emperor’s attitude is an indifference that works against Christian expansion: hence the lament over his lack of firm belief in God. But with the words that follow here, the text also recalls the different sort of lack noticed among Prester John and his people — “they do not have all the articles of the law, such as we have” — an apparently flawed state that is now redefined as apostolic simplicity (the echo of the early sketch of Greek Christianity reveals how far beyond neutrality the *Mandeville*-author has come in discussing sectarian diversity):

En sa terre y a moltz des Cristiens de bone foy et de bone loy, et mesmement de ceux de pais mesmes. Et ount comunement lours chapelleyns, qi chantent la messe et fount le sacrement de autier de pain [leue], si come ly Gregeois fount. Mes ils ne dient pas tantz des choses [ne de parolles] a la messe come lem fait par de cea; qar ils ne dient fors soulement ceo qe lappostres nostre Seignur lour enseignerount, si come saint Piere et saint Thomas et ly autres apostres chaunterount messe, en disant *Pater Noster* et les parols dont le corps nostre Seignur est consecree. Mes nous auoms plusours addicions, qe ly papes ont depuis faitz [et adioustees en la messe], dount ils ne scieuent riens.⁷⁹

In that land there are many Christians of good faith and of good law, and namely of those of the country itself. And they commonly have chaplains who sing mass and make the sacrament of the altar of [leavened] bread, as the Greeks do. But they do not say as many things [or words] at mass as one does over here; for they say only what the apostles of our Lord taught them, just as St. Peter and St. Thomas and the other apostles sang mass, saying *Pater Noster* and the words with which the body of our Lord is consecrated. But we have many additions that the popes have since made [and added to the mass], of which they know nothing.

The sentence that concludes this passage is not explicitly critical, but seen against the preceding sentence it looks less merely descriptive than it might otherwise have. The preceding sentence differs slightly in the Continental Version — “they say only what St. Thomas the apostle taught them, just as the apostles sang mass” (“il ne dient seulement fors ce que Saint Thomas laspotre

leur enseigna, si comme les apostres chanterent la messe”) —and it would be helpful to know which of these (if either) is the *Mandeville*-author's wording. The Continental reading is historically correct in medieval terms, but it makes the passage more orthodox than the Insular text, which implies that some forms of religious ignorance constitute virtuous simplicity, and therefore that “the governance of the most holy mother Church” (as the Vulgate Latin Version calls it in the Khan's portrait) has obscured “the purity of the Christian faith” (as the same version calls it). In either case, though, the concluding words show *The Book* again making common and potentially Self-critical cause with religious Otherness while at the same time obliquely attempting to console medieval audiences for the recent territorial losses alluded to in the emperor's visit to Egypt; and the words also reveal how the two main French Versions attempt to command the audience's assent not only by radically simplifying the historical and theoretical issues that divided Christendom, but also by presenting those issues in the form of memorable and rhetorically calculated accounts of an imagined East.

Splendor But No Apostolic Simplicity in the Land of Ogier's Christian Heir

The *Mandeville*-author's crafty work here notwithstanding, *The Book's* medieval intermediaries respond to the information and ideology of the two-part portrait as they do elsewhere, with a mix of implicit assent, active resistance, and apparent indifference or misunderstanding. Unusually, the Bodley Version makes few changes here, the most significant — apart from the fact that the portrait of Prester John's Christian kingdom now precedes the displaced portrait of the Khan — being its reduction of the coda so that it offers no critical reflection on Latin Christendom. In contrast to the Bodley rendering, the Metrical, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin Versions make the larger sorts of change typical of their redactions, the first by reducing the entire account to a perfunctory verse paragraph, the other two by giving the whole a more orderly disposition, rewriting certain parts, and adapting the Liège Version's presentation of Prester John as Ogier the Dane's Christian heir in the farthest East. As usual, too, the Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Velser isotopes make relatively small changes; none of them radically alters the portrait as a whole, but some reveal the translators' thoughtful participation in the text.

Regarding the emperor's exemplary chastity, for example, the Egerton Version dispenses with the “naturalizing” explanation, having him procreate not seasonally, but “at foure certayne tyme in þe ȝere,” while Velser's Ver-

sion says nothing about the seasonal pattern. Both of these translations also make notable minor changes to the coda on Prester John's name and the state of Christianity in his land. The German translation, for example, makes the emperor's choice of name more memorable by putting the scene into direct discourse, but then dulls the passage's contextual resonance by placing it well before Alexander's visit to "the Isle of the Faithful" ("die Ynsel der Trúwe"), and it obscures the critical mirror of Latin Christendom by reducing the description of local Christian practice to a single sentence: "Also you ought to know that good Christians are in his land and they celebrate mass as the Greeks do with leavened bread" ("Item ir sôllend wissen das gût cristen sind in sinem land und begond die mesß als die Kriechen mit erhabem brott"). There is no dialogue in the Egerton rendering of this passage, which concentrates instead on elaborating the *Mandeville*-author's account of the ceremony that prompted Prester John to take his name. Whereas in the Insular Version the emperor watches as the bishop "perform[s] many solemnities," in the Egerton Version he is treated to a conversion-inspiring display of true Christian ceremony in "þe makýng of pretez, [seeing] how sollempnely and how bisily and deuotely þai ware ordaynd." More significant, though, is this redaction's resistance to the critique of Latin Christendom implied in the depiction of the local faith; if anything, the critique now tilts in the other direction: "And also þai say nozt þaire messez in all thingez as oure pretez duse; bot þai say all anely þe *Pater Noster* and þe wordes of þe consecracioun with whilk þe sacrement es made, as sayne Thomas þe apostill taght þam in alde tyme. Bot of þe ordynauncez and addiciouns of þe courte of Rome whilk oure pretez vsez can þai nozt."⁸⁰

The potentially critical comparison between eastern and western Christendom also meets with resistance in the von Diemeringen and the Vulgate Latin Versions, although each resists it differently. The Latin redaction, for example, omits the coda altogether, whereas the German translation reduces and displaces it into the initial statement that Prester John and his people are devout Christians, even if their faith is different. As with the coda, so with the entire account: both redactions reorder it to make it tidier, but each does so in its own way. Thus, unlike the Vulgate Latin's rationalized rendering, von Diemeringen's lacks the rhetorically effective dialectic of splendor and simplicity—which means that it also lacks the critically reflective undertone of the *Mandeville*-author's original. The German translation's resistance to *The Book*'s critical mirrors here and elsewhere is perhaps explained by a remark in its radically reworked account of why few travelers reach Prester John's land, a remark that also explains the medieval fascination with the East generally. Instead of retelling the anecdote of Sir John's voyage past the lodestone rocks, von Diemeringen's Version names other obstacles, including harsh terrain and

wild animals (Velser's unrelated rendering even mentions sea monsters), and in the process describes Ynde as a world apart, rather than as the symmetrically opposite world depicted in the *Mandeville*-author's earlier introduction to Ynde, a passage omitted by the German translator: "Ynde is *just like another world divided from this world* by great high mountain ranges and by the sea" ("Indien ist *recht also eyne ander werlt gescheiden von diesser werlde* mit grossen hohen gebirge und mit dem mere").⁸¹

The most significant change in von Diemeringen's Version occurs in the explanation of Prester John's name, which, as noted, is no longer a distant coda, but rather follows the initial description of the emperor's palace. As with the Khan's title, this version has Sir John offer two explanations, one of which—the *Mandeville*-author's original account of Prester John's journey into Egypt to see the Christian service—the Knight rejects. In the present instance, though, the preferred alternative does not undermine the basic purpose of the rejected account: that of making farthest Ynde historically part of Christendom. Indeed, it links these two vaguely defined regions even more closely than does the rejected explanation and draws them together, oddly enough, by means of a genealogical relation resembling the one denied in the account of the Khan's title.

The difference is that the explanation that Sir John now accepts makes Ynde's incorporation into Christendom quite recent, the result not of peaceful apostolic but of military expansion. Moreover, the account must have seemed even more dubious to medieval audiences than did the rejected Cham/Chan genealogy, since it requires them to accept that Ogier the Dane had left a pious nephew behind as emperor of Ynde—a fellow so pious that he was jestingly nicknamed Prester John and destined to leave his nickname to his successors as an honorable title: "the same Prester John performed such manly deeds and great work thereafter that his uncle Ogier placed him in charge of the land both of Pentexoire and of India. . . . And therefore his heirs and children whom he produced there have since possessed the name until today" ("derselbe priester Johans deet also manheit und grosse arbeit darnach, do Oiger syn oheim jm das lant bevolen hatte von Pontexore und von Indien miteynander. . . . Und darvon hant syne erben und kynder, die er da machte, nach den namen biss off diessen hutigen dagh behalden").⁸²

Like most of the Ogier passages in von Diemeringen's Version, this one comes from the Liège Version and so does not represent the German redactor's own response to the *Mandeville*-author's work. Yet the resistant Liège account itself appears to have met some resistance in transmission, since its rhetorical presentation has been altered in ways that undermine the authority of the preferred onomastic account. In the Liège redaction, in a move adapted

from the Continental Version, Sir John tells the two alternative stories for those who do not know why the emperor of Ynde is called Prester John. Intending to explain what local history in Ynde records, the Knight first relates something that he has often heard “en nostre pays”—the geographical contrast suggesting which explanation will be the more credible. At the end of this initial “hearsay” account, which is taken almost verbatim from the Continental Version, the Liège Sir John turns to the “historical” story with an authenticating gesture almost never used in the two main French versions: the claim that when he was in Ynde, he “found [the true explanation] in a most beautiful chronicle in the church of Our Lady in the city of Nyse,” Prester John’s capital (“ie [le] trouuay en vne cronique moult bial qui est en leglyze nostre dame en la cyte de nyse”).⁸³

In von Diemeringen’s Version, in contrast, the two stories are reversed, so that the authorized and (as it were) divinely sanctioned explanation precedes the discredited one—a rearrangement that partly works against itself. In addition, the Liège redactor’s rhetorically persuasive contrast of “hearsay” and “historical” accounts is adapted so that the “historical” story too is introduced as “hearsay”: “*It is believed* that Prester John is of Ogier’s lineage and they [the emperors] have come from him and are his true heirs, as the kings of France are supposed to be of King Charles’s line” (“*Man meynet*, das syc pristers Johans von Oygers geslechte und sint von jmme kommen und synt syn rechte erben, als dye konig von Franckrich von konig Karle linigen solent syn”). This noncommittal introduction only weakens the authenticating gesture that follows the story, when Sir John steps forward to explain that he found the account in a church archive, especially since the original account is introduced as another “hearsay” version, not as something heard in “nostre pays.” In the end, then, when the two stories are complete, Sir John cannot move on to other matters; he has to try to persuade his audience that the earlier and more outlandish story is the more credible, and he can do so only with the lame assertion that he believes it because it was written down: “But I believe better than this [account] the first, which I have seen in a truthful book indeed” (“Abir ich gleuben des ersten bass dan diessen, des ich gar eyn warhaftig buch gesehen han”).⁸⁴

There is no such rhetorical awkwardness or ambiguity in the Vulgate Latin Version, which follows the Liège redaction in making the authenticating contrast right at the start. Unlike both its French source and the German redaction, though, this version does not give the audience the opportunity to oppose the text’s own resistance to the story of Prester John’s Egyptian journey. Instead, it deals with the alternative in a way already mentioned: by dispensing with it. The text’s introductory remarks also omit all mention of

the foreign chronicle so neatly found in a church of Our Lady: "This emperor is always called Prester John, whose name I once heard an untrue account of: but in those regions I learned the indisputable explanation, which I briefly recount here" ("Imperator iste semper vocitatus est Presbyter Ioannes, cuius nominis causam audieram quandoque non veram: sed in illis partibus accepi rationem indubitata[m], quam breuiter hic enarro").⁸⁵

The textual "here" in question is not the explanation's original location following the later description of the "Terre de Foy," as in the Liège Version; nor is it toward the end of the description of the emperor's palace, as in the von Diemeringen Version. Rather, it is near the beginning of the portrait of Prester John's realm, following the brief comparison of the emperor with the Khan and an even briefer statement about the empire's political geography. Thus displaced, the radically revised account clearly announces its importance, and it serves to explain at the outset a question answered only much later in the Continental and Insular Versions: why the emperor and his people are good Christians. In addition, and more significantly, the resistant Latin account works to bring farther Ynde as a whole within an extended (if necessarily discontinuous) Latin Christendom in a manner quite different from that of the Continental and Insular explanations; and as a consequence, it makes Prester John's world appear to be a distant member of the same body, rather than a critical mirror:

Dum ergo Ogerus dictas regiones expugnatas diuideret in hijs quindecim suis cognatis, & quemlibet eorum in suo loco constitueret regem, quatenus Christiana religio in illa orbis superficie semper stabilis permaneret, tradidit isti Presbytero Ioanni superiorem Indiam, cum 4000. insulis, regionibus, & ipsum prefecit Imperatorem super reliquos cognatos, vt ei certa tributa impenderent, & in omnibus obedirent, atque ex tunc omnes successores Indiae sunt vocati Presbyter Ioannes, & vsque in hodiernum tempus boni manserunt Christiani, & religionis aemulatores.

After Ogier had therefore conquered the said regions, he divided them among these his fifteen relatives, and at their pleasure made each of them a king in his place, so that the Christian religion might remain always fixed in that upper part of the [earthly] circle. To this Prester John he transferred upper Ynde, with 4000 islands [and] regions, and appointed him Emperor over his other kin, so that they would pay him a certain tribute, and obey him in all things, and since then all his successors are called Prester John, and right to the present day they have remained good Christians, and zealous in their religion.

In this account, then, Prester John and his Christian realm are the product of an earlier and heroically expansive moment in Latin Christendom. They are emphatically not the *Mandeville*-author's eastern representatives of

an incunabular Christianity that is depicted first as defective but devoutly followed and later as apostolically pure, the former portrait reflecting badly on Latin Christian practice, the latter conjuring up a vision of a place where faith is uncomplicated by history. The Vulgate Latin redactor has no time for this naïve sort of primitivism, although he just as naïvely depicts history as a corrupting force by supplementing the passage quoted above with a comment on the collapse of eastern Christianity outside Prester John's courtly circle; this comment simply inverts the *Mandeville*-author's insinuation that Latin Christendom has fallen away from the foundational purity of Prester John's faith: "Nevertheless, because of marriages and the begetting of sons the unity of the first Empire has disintegrated, and many of the isles have conversely, or rather, perversely fallen back into the old squalor of original paganism" ("Interim cum causa matrimoniorum aut procurationis filiorum dispersa est primi Imperij integritas, & multe de insulis conuerse vel potius peruerse retrocesse-runt ad vetustum squalorem paganismi primi").

No words could be further than these from the spirit of the *Mandeville*-author's original compilation, even though they share its concern with power and the spread of the Faith, and they reveal yet again the remarkable ideological elasticity of the mandevillean multi-text, which could be overwritten with as much freedom as the author himself took. In contrast to the Vulgate Latin Version, the authorial isotope often views pagan practices in an ecumenical, almost anthropological light, describing many of them—heliolatry, for example—as reasonable and motivated, sometimes as proto-Christian, and it draws attention to pagan piety wherever possible, typically to shame *The Book's* projected audience into wanting to do better themselves. In addition, as the next chapter shows, the author goes so far as to have Sir John proclaim that God accepts all who serve him meekly and devoutly, whatever their faith. This is an assertion that may be partly at odds with *The Book's* interest in power and Christian expansion, although it can also be understood as an attempt to assimilate the larger non-Christian world into an imagined universal Christendom, where those who still lack revealed knowledge of the One True God nevertheless know him as "Dieu de nature." Before his work explicitly affirms the salvific power of even pagan piety, though, the *Mandeville*-author brings Sir John onstage for his most extensive appearance anywhere in *The Book*, taking him on an infernal journey, in order to demonstrate how effective renewed devotion can be in helping the ordinary Christian survive the worst of worldly trials.

Personal and Pagan Piety in the Direction of Paradise

AT THE END OF ITS LEISURELY ACCOUNT of the Khan's and Prester John's imperial domains—which effectively concludes, as we saw in the previous chapter, with a contrastive look at the Assassins' false Paradise—*The Book* leaves off describing cities and courts and returns to depicting the world in a state of “nature,” making its brisk way through more than a dozen marvelous isles toward the Earthly Paradise. With the significant exception of the infernal valley through which the text first passes, none of the places noticed in this penultimate stage of the tour come from Odoric's *Relatio*, and the *Mandeville*-author ceases here to use the friar's itinerary as a template. In fact, he returns to his underlying source only once more and very briefly, overwriting it for *The Book*'s two or three final stops prior to its formal close. Until then, he turns to other sources—including Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*, and the *Roman d'Alexandre*—and compiles an ethno-geographical survey that resembles the catalogue-like manner of parts of the long tour from Trebizond to Cathay.

Since many of the “choses estranges” mentioned in this late and lengthy departure from Odoric's itinerary look frivolous—cannibal giants; women with precious stones in their eyes whose gaze kills like the Basilisk's; a people with a class of young men called “hopeless Fools” (“Fol desperez”), whose task it is to take the virginity of others' new wives, because, as Sir John discovered, some men there once died from the snakes inside their wives' bodies¹—one can probably assume that the *Mandeville*-author wanted to offer a diverting change of pace and focus after the considerable attention given to a very few figures of unmatched power and religious influence. In addition, since the survey contains an inventory of exotic animals—“cocodrilles,” chamelions, lions, elephants, and so on—one might likewise suppose that the author was overwriting the closing sections of Odoric's *Relatio* so as to make them better reflect the world's copious diversity. Both assumptions remain unprovable, of

course, but they account for much of what *The Book* includes in approaching the “comencement de la terre” where Paradise is situated.

What they do not account for is three important passages concerned with religious matters that occupy more textual space than the diverting marvels. The third of these passages is the account of Paradise, which effectively concludes *The Book*’s eastern tour, since after approaching it the instructive itinerary turns briefly back the way it came and the text draws to a close. This geographically climactic account falls into four main parts, only one of which (the second) focuses on the nature of humanity’s first home: “I cannot properly tell you about the earthly paradise,” Sir John admits by way of justifying the form of his account, “for I was never there. That pains me, for I was not worthy to go there. But what I heard said about it in the country [from the wisest men] over there, I shall willingly tell you most of it” (“De paradis terrestre ne vous saroie ie proprement parler, car ie ny fui onques. Ce poise moy, car ie ne fu mie digne de la aler. Mais ce qe ien oy dire ou pays [a plus sages] par dela, le plus ie vous en diray moult uolentiers”). The resulting “hearsay” sketch is brief, and the Paradise depicted is, as Deluz notes, “severe,” the internal features of the traditional Edenic *locus amoenus* having already been described in the false Paradise.² Significantly, this distant glance is followed by a fuller look at the site’s four rivers, the course of each being traced well into the world, so that the entire East is shown in its geographical connection with the source of Christian History. No less significantly, these two physical descriptions are framed by two paragraphs that emphasize Paradise’s apartness, the closing frame negatively overwriting the story (from the *Iter ad Paradisum*) of Alexander the Great’s successful voyage to Paradise so as to explain why “no mortal can approach [there], except by God’s special grace” (“nul mortel ne poet approcher, si ceo nestoit de especial grace de Dieu”).³

Obstacles to travel also figure prominently in the first of the three important passages mentioned above, but to opposite effect, as the *Mandeville*-author writes Sir John into Odoric’s closing and climactic narrative of his harrowing journey through the infernal valley mentioned above. Easily the finest piece of writing in *The Book*, the displaced and much-augmented story occurs in two quite different forms in the two main French texts; the Continental rendering is about twice as long as the Insular. In my view, neither form is obviously the authorial “original,” although the longer story contains a mystical element that seems out of keeping with the rest of *The Book*. In both cases, moreover, the story stands out as the one passage that recounts “Mandeville’s travels”—and the travels in question are religious in nature. Like the accounts discussed in the previous chapter, the tale of Sir John’s death-defying journey through the valley is concerned with faith and power, the difference being

that it celebrates the power of personal piety against both worldly temptation and the malevolent spirit world, rather than the power of collective devotion against one's earthly enemies.

The second important passage, in contrast, returns to the earlier concern, as the *Mandeville*-author twice retells the famous story of Alexander the Great's encounter with the ascetic philosopher Dindimus (who remains unnamed). In *The Book's* deliberately double account, the simple and devout peoples of three separate isles—one of which is called the "Terre de Foy"—defeat their would-be conqueror not by force of arms, but with reason and faith in their natural form. Thus, whereas the narrative of Sir John's infernal journey has no counterpart in the text, despite its thematic resonance with a good many passages, the dual portrait of these potentially attainable terrestrial paradises stands as the culmination of *The Book's* accounts of religious Otherness and pagan piety. Indeed, the significance of this late section as a kind of thematic summa is impossible to miss, since it gives rise to a theological coda in which Sir John proclaims and tries to prove that God loves all those who love and serve him, regardless of their faith or sect.

Given its importance to our grasp of the *Mandeville*-author's book as whole, the Knight's generous embrace of pagan piety is one of the two principal subjects of the present chapter; the other is the equally important—because unique—presentation of his personal piety as it reveals itself in his soul-trying passage through the infernal valley. What links these disparate passages is that they both resume and develop *The Book's* longstanding concern with faith as practice rather than as doctrine, the first memorably dramatizing the personal efficacy of confession, communion, and trusting to God, the second making an exemplary case for the simple, even ascetic life—which is seen to promote individual well-being, social harmony, and a temperate environment, while protecting against foreign conquest. In addition, in contrast to the untidy and sprawling portraits of the Khan and Prester John, the two passages reveal the *Mandeville*-author at his formal best as a revisionary writer, while like those portraits they show his considerable versatility as entertainer, rhetorician, and propagandist.

By the same token, the two passages reveal the varied literary abilities and ideological responses of his earliest intermediaries, who typically intervene in them even as they leave untouched the surrounding accounts of "choses estranges." The von Diemerungen Version, for example, partly plays down the religious dimension of Sir John's journey through the infernal valley so that one more readily notices the sheer excitement of it, whereas the Vulgate Latin Version does just the opposite; instead of compressing the text in its usual manner, the Latin redaction considerably expands it, emphasizing the purga-

torial allegory. In contrast to both of these renderings, which betray no sign that their redactors were worried about the story's authenticity, Velser's Version interrupts his translation to explain how he found Sir John's incredible tale supported by a book written by one of the Knight's fellow travelers—a book to which he was led, moreover, by the friar who came to confess him during Lent.

The German translator also interrupts his rendering of the Alexander legend to support the text, this time by repairing the omission of Dindimus' name,⁴ but the more significant change to his rendering is the lack of the theological coda. The important coda is likewise lacking in the Bodley, Metrical, and Vulgate Latin Versions, and reduced to almost nothing in the von Diemeringen. The difference is that the legend in the Velser Version leads straight into Sir John's closing comments on the state of belief in the pagan world generally, and it thus retains much of its original ideological force. Three of the four other renderings, in contrast, reshape the account so as to point a different moral. In the Bodley Version the legend still looks like propaganda for the pious life, but without any consideration of piety's ultimate rewards, whereas in the Vulgate Latin, von Diemeringen, and Metrical Versions it becomes an anti-war exemplum, with Alexander as a negative figure in the first two, and a positive one in the verse redaction. The most interesting changes here occur in the von Diemeringen Version, which sets Alexander's pagan imperialism against Ogier the Dane's Christian expansionism, and claims that the former's virtuous enemies are so close to being Christians that they could be easily converted—a claim that the *Mandeville*-author's Sir John makes about the Saracens.

Surviving the Valley of the Shadow of Death: A Tall Tale of Reluctant Daring, Infernal Deception, and Renewed Devotion

Like the account of the false Paradise that precedes it, the story of Sir John's passage through the infernal valley comes from Odoric's *Relatio*, but unlike that account, the story has been so reworked and expanded that it scarcely resembles its source. Exactly how far the *Mandeville*-author's renovations go is difficult to say, however, since the Continental and Insular Versions transmit the tale in two quite different forms, the Continental form being about twice as long as the Insular. It is not obvious which of the two is prior, or which might represent the *Mandeville*-author's original—assuming, as seems likely,

that he was not responsible for both, producing one as a revision of the other.

The fact, for instance, that the Continental form appears to tell the same story twice over does not necessarily point to its being an unauthorized expansion, as Bennett would have it, since in the subsequent account of Alexander's lesson in natural piety both French versions make use of the common rhetorical device of expansion by elaboration and repetition, the expansion there as here containing material that could be considered supplementary rather than redundant.⁵ In the shorter form of the story, moreover, where the narrative of the journey seems somewhat truncated, Sir John encounters only three of the four marvels mentioned as being in the valley (riches, dead bodies, and storms, but not the fiery devil's head), while in the longer version, he also comes across the fourth—positive evidence, one could argue, that the longer form is also the original. Accepting this evidence, and seeing nothing decisively unmandevillean in the elaboration and repetition *as such*, one should be able to regard the longer version as authorial. But I do not, at least not entirely, for there is other evidence to consider: the greater emphasis in the story's continuation on the palpable, as opposed to the apparent, experience of the demonic world, and especially Sir John's vision of unspeakable divine secrets. There is nothing like this anywhere in either French version, whose accounts of religion tend to extol a pious and practical, rather than a mystical Christianity.

On the available evidence, then, which is essentially stylistic and thematic, the question of priority seems to me undecidable, although the highly unusual thematic concerns of the longer form make me incline somewhat toward the view that it is not entirely authorial, that it represents a significant and consequential variant. In any case, the crucial point is that both forms merit critical attention as part of the multi-text.

In Odoric's *Relatio*, the personal narrative that lies behind the two variants stands as the climax and conclusion of the entire memoir, as noted already, but it is not an example of distinguished storytelling, either in the friar's Latin or in le Long's slightly more orderly and less pious French. Little more than an ordinary anecdote about an extraordinary experience, the tale in Odoric's telling reveals the same bewilderment that he claims to have felt during the journey itself.⁶ It begins by announcing that he saw something terrible while traveling down one of the rivers of Paradise, and then recounts his approach to a valley from which frightening music was emerging. According to the local people, the seven- or eight-mile-long valley was impassable, but Odoric entered it anyway so as to know what it was, finding it filled with corpses and containing the horrible image of a human face on the moun-

tainside; this face nearly scared him to death, but he sustained himself by repeating “*Verbum caro factum est*” (John 1: 14). At the valley’s other end, he ascended a sandy hill, from which he could see and hear nothing, but where he found a great quantity of silver; gathering some up, but carrying none of it away, he departed, and all the Saracens who saw him enter the valley came to him and revered him as a baptized and holy man, in contrast to the hellish devils in the valley.

Such, then, is the dramatic close of Odoric’s highly uneven memoir of his prolonged wanderings in the vast eastern mission field: a tale of curiosity, fear, and temptation overcome by faith, wherein the infidel spontaneously recognize the hero’s holiness. It is almost a fitting close; for if the friar has failed to return with news of a great harvest of souls, he can at least confirm the power of the Faith against infernal evil—while not incidentally revealing his own Christian heroism—and show Latin Christendom’s most important external Other readily acknowledging that power.

The *Mandeville*-author’s reworking of this didactic story has none of the emotional resonance generated by the symbolic placement that Odoric gives it; but then it scarcely needs that sort of help, since it has become a much fuller and richer story—as well as a more overtly religious one, as though it were a full-scale rendering of Psalm 23: 4. Whereas Odoric gets the whole harrowing thing over with in a hurry, plunging straight into the valley and emerging several sentences later as a shaken but faithful hero, the *Mandeville*-author takes as long just to set the physical and human scene, transforming the friar’s personal experiences into an elaborate description that is at once more general and more specific than its source. At the end of this elaborate proem, Sir John and his companions finally make their appearance on the textual stage, but the *Mandeville*-author spends a long paragraph preparing them for the spiritually trying journey. Only then, only after having delayed their passage with an account that is twice as long as Odoric’s entire narrative, does he bring the travelers through the valley, and the journey itself occupies either half a printed page or two pages, depending on the redaction.

The result of this rhetorically calculated expansion—in both its longer and its shorter forms—stands as the best piece of writing in the entire text. Not only do the many changes make the marvelous story more compelling and memorable than its inspiration; they also make it seem at once more real and more symbolic. In the opening description, for example, the valley is located much more precisely in geographical space, as, among other things, the river of Paradise down which Odoric traveled is named, and yet the most specific detail (“on the left side”) is the most symbolically resonant (the de-

tail of the valley's length is brought forward from its slightly later place in the *Relatio*):⁷

Relatio. Une chose vis-je moult hydeuse ainsi que je cheminoie selon un des fleuves du Paradis. Je approchay une valée qui estoit assez près de ce fleuve.

I saw *something most hideous* as I made my way down one of the rivers of Paradise. I approached a valley that was quite close to this river.

The Book. Delez cel isle de Millestorach, sur la senestre partie par delez la riviere de Phison, y a une merveilleuse chose: c'est une vallee entre les montaignes, qui dure bien pres de iiij. lieues.

Beyond this isle of Millestorach, on the left side beyond the river Phison, there is *something marvelous*; it is a valley between two mountains that stretches almost a good four leagues.

Unnamed in the *Relatio*, the marvelous valley is given three names here—"le Val Enchanté," "le Val du Dyable," and "le Val Perilleux"—none of which is singled out as correct, and each of which creates different expectations: the third of them, for example, recalls a site from the Alexander romances. In addition, *The Book*'s opening words make the valley look more enticing, even as it retains some of its originally threatening features, which are brought forward from Odoric's final remarks (the tambours and drums are not the *Mandeville*-author's substitute for le Long's "harps"; they derive from Odoric's Latin "nachara"; only the trumpets are new, and they give the noises a regal note):⁸

Relatio. A l'aprochier je ouy diverses manières d'instrumens de musique et spécialement harpes. Comme plus vins près plus oy grant noise finalement ouy une noise si grande que en eus grant paour et hyde. . . . je y entray. . . . Tous les Sarrazins qui m'en virent venir . . . dirent que j'estoye baptizie et sains homs mais cilz qui la estoient demourez estoient tous deables d'enfer.

On approaching it, I heard various kinds of musical instruments and especially harps. The closer I came the greater the noise; finally I heard a noise so great that I was greatly afraid and horrified. . . . I entered there. . . . All the Saracens who

The Book. En ceste valee ot on moult de tempestes et moult de grandes noises tous les jours et toutes les nuis, et grante friente et grant son de tabours, de naccaires et de trompes. si qu'il eüst une grant feste. Ceste valee est toute plaine de dyables, et a esté toudis, et dist on que c'est une des entrees de infer.

In this valley one hears many storms and many great noises every day and every night, and a great beating and a great sound of tambours, of drums and of trumpets, *as though there were a great celebration*. This valley is completely full of

saw me come out of it . . . said that I was a baptized and a holy man but *those who remained there were all devils of hell.* *devils*, and always has been, and it is said that it is *one of the entrances to hell.*

The few details in le Long's Odoric that are as yet unexploited by the *Mandeville*-author make their way, equally transformed, into the rest of this opening description, as the infernal aspect of the valley is now given its due, right down to the fire, smoke, and stench: Odoric's frightening face, for example, becomes a fully realized devil's head that owes something to iconographic tradition.⁹

Before having Sir John descend into hell, however, the author turns the enticing appearance of the valley to didactic account. The silver that tempted Odoric appears here as gold and silver, much sought after by "maint mescreant et maint crestien," few of whom make it back out of the valley, "especialment de mescreans," yet few too of those Christians who were motivated by avarice, "for they are immediately strangled by the devils" ("car ilz sont tantost estranglez des dyables"). Not all Christians are avaricious, of course, and the opening passage now turns to them. Unlike their dead brethren, "les bons crestiens" who are "en bon estat," and "estable en foy," can enter safely, confessing and crossing themselves so that the devils have no power over them. Their only difficulty is fear, first of the demons who assault them as they travel, and then of God himself, lest he exact vengeance for anything done "against his will" ("encontre sa volenté").

With this remark, the introduction comes to a close and Sir John and his companions arrive on the scene. As they do, the text shifts from description with implied narrative to almost pure narrative, and the account itself briefly speeds up, stating within the space of a few sentences that not all of those who entered made it out again, thereby whetting one's appetite for a more detailed relation. Seen in outline, the elements of this proleptic passage reveal something of its manner and concerns: from doubt, the text moves through debate and daring to devotion, decision, and departure, the doubt returning in another form upon arrival. In a particularly subtle gesture—made perhaps in homage to Odoric, perhaps in jest—the *Mandeville*-author here brings a pair of nameless friars into the picture, making them partly responsible for the daring and the devotion:

Et sachiez que quant mes compaignons et moy fusmes a celle valee, nous y fusmes en grant pensee se nous oseriens mettre le corps en aventure, et entrer en la protection de Dieu. Et aucuns de nos compaignons s'i acorderent, et aucuns estoient au contraire. Si avoit la avec nous deux pseudommes freres mineurs qui estoient de Lombardie,

qui dirent que s'il y avoit nulz de nous qui vouldist entrer, qu'ilz se meissent en bon estat, et ilz entreroient avec li. Et quant les pseudommes nous disoient ce, sur la fiance de Dieu et de eux nous feismes chanter messe, et fusmes confessez et acommuniez, et y entrames nous xiiij. Mais a l'issir nous n'estiemes que ix. Et sy ne savons se nos compaignons estoient perdus, ou se ilz estoient retournez arriere et issus fors, mais toutefois nous ne les veismes puis. Et estoient ij Gregois et iij Espagnos. Nos autres compaignons ne vourrent point entrer, ains allerent par un aultre costé pour nous estre au devant, et si firent ilz.¹⁰

And know that when my companions and I were at this valley, we gave much thought to whether we dared venture our bodies, and enter under God's protection. And some of our companions agreed, and some were opposed. And there were with us two wise friars minor who were from Lombardy, who said that if there was none of us who wanted to enter, they would put themselves in good condition, and enter with us. And when the wise men told us this, on God's faith and theirs, we had them sing mass, and we were confessed and given communion, and fourteen of us entered. But on emerging we were only nine. And we do not know whether our companions perished, or whether they turned back and went out, but in any case we have not seen them since. And they were two Greeks and three Spaniards. Our other companions did not want to enter at all, so they went by another way in order to be ahead of us, and so they were.

For many writers and readers, *The Book's* narrative could have come to a satisfactory close at this point. Not for the *Mandeville*-author, however. In his rendering, the story is only two-thirds (or one-third) over, since the actual journey has still to be recounted. That recounting follows immediately, and as it does, the narrative slows down considerably, while the focus narrows mainly to Sir John's experience of the valley's horrors, the worst of which is the abundance of dead bodies, as if an all-out war had been fought by the two most powerful kings of the country and most of the troops had been killed (does this allude to the long-standing war between France and England?). Although it looks like little more than a poetic gesture, a kind of epic simile, the "as if" introducing the image of slaughter is crucial to this last (or next) part of the story; for in it, Sir John's terrifying experience—unlike Odoric's—is represented above all as one of "seeming," as different forms of the verb "sambler" occur at least five times in the short space of the remaining paragraph of the whole (or of this part): for example, "But if it was as it seemed to us, I really do not know, for I never touched a thing . . ." ("Mais s'il estoit ainsi qu'il nous sambloit, ce ne sai je mye, car je ne touchay oncques nulle chose . . .").¹¹

Despite, or perhaps rather because of this uncertain seeming, Sir John's experience is also depicted as one of deep devotion. He touches nothing, he says, not simply because he knows that tempting appearances can be the deceptive work of devils (as in the grail romances), but also because to do so

would jar him out of the pious state of being in which he now finds himself: "For I was more devout then than I have ever been since, as much for terror at the enemies that I saw in many forms, as for the dead bodies of which I saw so many lying throughout the entire valley" ("Car j'estoye plus devot adonques que je ne fus oncques puis, tant pour la terreur des anemis que je veoye en pluseurs figures, tant pour les corps mors de quoy je veoye tant gesir par toute la valee"). What is particularly disturbing about the dead bodies is that they seem to be "entiers," or undecomposed, and since not all of them could be so recently dead, they too must be the work of the devils. Many of the bodies, moreover, are recognizably Christian in their dress, and this leads Sir John to suggest that they belong to Christians who were deceived by their great greed or who were too feeble-hearted to withstand the fear—a suggestion that serves not only to distinguish him and his companions from the imperfectly faithful dead without any indecorous boasting, but also to recall the Sultan's critique of covetous Christian behavior, and, in combination with civil war simile, to echo the exordium's criticism of the ruling estate, whose behavior has allowed the Holy Land to remain in possession of the "mescreantz." In the present context, the recollection and echo remain faint, but the local comparison is boldly made, since it represents the moral of the story: "And because of all this we were more devout" ("Et pour tant estiemmes nous plus devos").

In the Insular Version, the story ends here, with Sir John and his companions in an appropriately heightened devotional state, although not without a last blast from the valley intended to recall the Christian heroism of the travelers and acknowledge the source of their strength: "And because of all this we were much more devout, and we were beaten to the ground many times by wind and by thunders and by storms, but always God helped us; thus we passed through the said valley without danger and without hindrance, thanks to God" ("Et pur tant estoims nous plus deuoutz asses, et si feusmes abatuz a terre plusours foitz par vent et par tonnoires et par tempestes, mes tout ades nous aida Dieu; ensy passams par la dite valle saunz perill et saunz encombrement, a Dieu graces").¹² It is a fitting conclusion, recapitulating the story in a few sentences—even as told in the Continental Version, where the very same words bring the longer form to a close—and yet one cannot help feeling that the story has been truncated in the midst of things. The travelers have entered the valley and experienced most of its terrors, but they have not actually passed through it, except in the telescoped narrative of the conclusion.

If the shorter redaction represents the *Mandeville*-author's work, then he must have thought the abbreviated recollections of the journey complete the moment he mentioned the travelers' increased devotion, and someone else must have decided that the mention of this heightened piety required further

expansion, as did the travelers' adventures. If, on the other hand, the author was only just warming to his subject and still had the bulk of the story to tell, as one finds it in the longer form, then someone else must have thought the brief devotional expression a fitting ending marred by too much spiritualizing elaboration, and cut the loquacious storyteller off at an opportune moment. There is nothing in either redaction that would decisively confirm either hypothesis, but as noted above, I regard the essentially spiritual concerns of the extension (continuation) as possible evidence of an unmandevillean hand, and so I lean slightly toward the view that the *Mandeville*-author thought the devotional moment a fitting conclusion—even though I find it a disappointing close, because it stops rather than concludes the story.

The interpolated extension—or authorial continuation—begins by using the devotional pause (“we were more devout”) to direct attention back to the initial physical setting. Developing the experience of seeming, and drawing on elements of the archetypal journey into the underworld, the text places the travelers in an allegorical context, bringing them from a fine road through a fine entrance into a tortuous road between the mountains, while carrying them from daylight into a darkness as deep as that of a moonless, starless night. About a league in, the travelers all (“et religieux et autres”) find themselves stuck in the darkness, a fate that prompts them to wish something that resonates strangely with most of *The Book*'s portraits of worldly power, although not with the account still to come of Alexander's rebuke by the pious ascetics: “know that if any of us had been lord and sovereign of all the land in the world, he would freely have renounced all worldly things so that he could be out of danger” (“sachiez que se chascun de nous eust este sire et souverain de toute la terre du monde, il eust volentiers renonchié a toutes choses mondaines, mais qu'il peuwist estre hors du peril”).¹³

From this pseudo-vow, the text proceeds to the still undescribed “peril” that provoked it: being beaten to the earth more than a thousand times by unknown animals and ferocious storms. The copious dead of the shorter form return here (presumably to help motivate the renunciation of worldly power), but in a more hellish way: “And we found so many dead beneath our feet who bewailed our passing over them that it was a hideous thing to hear” (“Et trouvasmes tant de mors dessoubz nos piez qui se plaindoient que nous passiemmes sus, que c'estoit hideuse chose a oyr”). This Dantesque moment gives way to another that looks like a repudiation of the *Paradiso*, as Sir John announces his knowledge of marvels more fascinating than he could ever have seen at the Khan's or even Prester John's court, and the reason why he cannot communicate the knowledge:

Et suy certain que se nous n'eussions recheu Corpus Domini, que nous fussiemes tous perdus et demourez [en ce lieu. Neentmoins] eut chascun de nous une enseigne, car la fu chascun de nous ferus durement et tant, que nous demouriensmes tous en pamisons longuement. Mais en ces pamisons nous veismes espirituelement moult de merveilles dont je n'oserie parler, car les moines qui estoient avec nous nous deffendirent a tous que nous ne parlissiemes fors de ce que nous aviesmes veu corporelement, pour les secrez de Nostre Seigneur celer.¹⁴

And I am certain that if we had not received the Corpus Domini, we should all have perished and remained [in this place. Nevertheless,] each of us had a mark, for there each of us was struck so hard and often that we all remained unconscious for a long time. But in that unconscious state we saw spiritually many marvels that I dare not tell, for the monks who were with us prohibited us from saying anything except what we saw bodily, in order to conceal the secrets of Our Lord.

To a certain extent, this claim resembles Sir John's assertion in the Vulgate Latin Version that the Psalter phrase placing Jerusalem at the center of the world has a spiritual interpretation which he should not divulge, and it differs sharply from his comment in the two French versions about the little-known miracle at Mt. Sinai, wherein he suggests that the monks are concealing God's grace and so keeping people from devotion—hence my supposition that the longer form may be unauthorial. Yet if this part of the story does indeed represent someone else's work, then it also shows that person to be an intelligent reader, capable of developing a minor mandevillean theme: for not only does the remark on the Eucharist's power neatly unfold the implications of the earlier scene in which the travelers prepare for their journey by confessing and taking communion; it also recalls *The Book's* praise of the Christians in Georgia, Abkhazia, and Armenia for their practice of frequent communion, a practice said there to be neglected by Latin Christians.

Having coyly refused to give the audience even a glimpse of "God's pryvetee" (as Chaucer's Miller would say),¹⁵ the text at least gives them a good look at the "enseigne," or devil's mark, that each traveler brought back as a physical souvenir of his unwilling journey into the visionary world. After mentioning the various bodily places where each received this hand-sized black stain, the extended or continued account pays special attention to Sir John's "macula" and its symbolic change into an immaculate memorial:

Je fu feru ou col par tel maniere que je cuidoye que la teste fust dessevree du corps, et la ay je porté l'ensengne noire comme charbon plus de xvij ans. Mais puis que je me fus repentis de mes pechiez et que j'ay mis paine a Dieu servir selon ma fragilité, ceste tache est toute allee a neant, et est la peau plus blanche en ce lieu que aultre part. Mais toutefois le cop y pert bien, et perra tant que la carongne durera.

I was struck on the neck in such a manner that I thought my head had been severed from my body, and I carried there a mark as black as coal for more than eighteen years. But after I had repented of my sins and taken pains to serve God according to my frailty, this stain entirely disappeared, and the skin is whiter in that place than elsewhere. But the blow is easily seen there, and will be as long as the flesh lasts.

If this is not the work of the *Mandeville*-author, it is a good imitation, for it shows us Sir John as he most often appears in the Continental and Insular Versions: a figure heroically strong and deeply pious, yet still humanly limited, and willing to acknowledge his limitations even as he reminds the audience of his positive distinctions. What gives the scene away as potentially unmandevillean is the immediately following sentence in which Sir John offers his advice to the audience: "Wherefore I would not advise anyone to enter this valley, for in my view it is not pleasing to Our Lord that one enter it" ("Pour quoy je ne conseilleroye jamais nulluy a entrer en celle valee, car a mon advis il ne plaist mye a Nostre Seigneur que on y entre").¹⁶

As though to reinforce this pointless advice, the text returns here to describing the valley's horrors, finally elaborating the account of the hideous figure borrowed from Odoric and noticed in the opening description. Even more than the description of the "mark as black as coal," this passage looks indistinguishable from the *Mandeville*-author's work, such that when the travelers finally return to the light and feel much easier about things ("quant nous venismes ariere a clareté, si fusmes moult aises"), the critical reader does not. He or she is left looking back at an extension or continuation that seems mandevillean at the start, but that then diverges sharply from *The Book*'s usual concerns before once again taking on a mandevillean face. This resemblance (if such it is) extends right to the closing words quoted earlier, which, in the longer form as in the shorter, follow Sir John's emphasis on the devotional state induced by the valley's terrors: "I do not know how to describe much of what we saw, for I was too distracted by prayers and by devotions" ("Je ne saroye mie tant deviser de ce que nous veismes, car je estoie trop ensongnié par prieres et par devotions").¹⁷

In both its longer and its shorter form, then, the story of Sir John's passage through the valley arrives at the same devout conclusion about the power of piety against temptation and infernal evil. The main differences between them are that the longer form offers a more obviously allegorical account of the journey in its extension (or continuation) and that it insists more strenuously on the spiritual and corporeal nature of the experience in ways that make the account seem as much someone else's work as the *Mandeville*-author's. In either case, though, the passage as a whole represents the best

sustained piece of writing—descriptive, hortatory, or narrative—in *The Book*, and it shows more clearly than any other how much literary, rhetorical, and ideological potential the author could see in the sometimes pedestrian reading matter that served to carry him, his Knight, and their audience on their vicarious journey through the eastern world.

Enhancing, Authenticating, or Extending the Tall Spiritual Tale

Given the accomplished composition that they had to work from, *The Book's* earliest intermediaries clearly could do little to improve it. This is particularly true in the case of the story's longer form, which, as we have seen, may represent an attempt to exploit the potential of the shorter account, and which the Vulgate Latin redactor alone—in contradistinction to his usual practice—undertook to expand yet further. If the longer form does represent such an expansion, then it also represents a unique transformation of this passage, since none of the Insular isotopes augments the shorter form found in their source. The Defective Version, for example, is somewhat shorter still, since as usual it lacks some material, mainly in the final detailed recounting of the journey, where the devotional emphasis disappears. In contrast, the Metrical Version, which contains an even shorter third-person narrative, retains in its own way the pious element, suggesting that a successful journey will keep one out of "purgatorie" or "othire peyn," thus making the passage a kind of pilgrimage. Fittingly, Sir John's fellow travelers are now said to number "twelff," and he celebrates his safe passage by quoting the Psalter (though not 23: 4, as one might expect, but the related 65: 12): "And thus to God than seid the knyght: / *Transiimus per ignem et aquam et eduxisti / nos in refrigerium, et cetera* [We passed through fire and water, and you led us into refreshment, etc.]"¹⁸

In contrast, the Cotton and Egerton Versions transmit the shorter form much as they found it. The Cotton translator in fact makes only the slightest changes, adding a word here and there, largely to emphasize God's role in the travelers' safe passage, as, for example, at the close: "But eueremore god of *his grace* halp vs, And so wee passed þat perilous vale withouten perile + withouten encombrance, thanked be *all myghty* godd." The changes in the Egerton Version are more extensive than this, extending past diction into syntax, although not beyond syntax into the disposition of the larger account. In many places, this rendering reads like a paraphrase, as the redactor attempts, among other things, to heighten the tale's emotional rather than devotional force by means of pithier diction and tighter syntax. The brisk proleptic open-

ing, for example, unfolds even more briskly here, and, when set against its French source, shows the *Mandeville*-author's work open to considerable improvement in certain respects (the friars, curiously, are no longer wise men, but more like participants in a spiritual dare):

My felawes and I, when we come nere þat valay and herd speke þeroff, sum of vs kest in oure hertes to putte vs all halely in þe mercy of Godd to passe thurgh þat valay, and sum forsuke it and said þai wald noȝt putte þam in þat perill. And þare was in oure company twa frere meneours of Lumbardy, þat said þai wald ga thurgh þat valay, if we wald go with þam; and so, thurgh comforth of þaire wordes and þe excitacioun of þaim, we schrafe vs clene and herd messe and comound vs and went in to þe valay, xiiii. felawes sammen. Bot at þe commyng oute we ware bot ix.¹⁹

This passage can also be found almost verbatim in the Bodley Version's two copies, the text of the Musaeo manuscript resembling the Egerton's diction and phrasing more closely than that of the Rawlinson copy. Unusually, both copies transmit almost the entire account—a sure sign of its power as a kind of pious romance. In the Rawlinson text, it is true, the account lacks a number of significant details and concludes abruptly with the proleptic relation of the journey's mixed outcome, rather than with the journey itself, but in the Musaeo text, the relation appears nearly intact, and the manuscript's few small interpolations compensate for its few small omissions. In depicting, for example, the fate of those who enter the valley out of greed, this copy gives them a thoroughly diabolical treatment: instead of being “immediately strangled by devils,” they “arn strangeled and forshapyn [transformed] and forfarin [destroyed] and wirwid [choked] with deuyllis.” Among the significant changes common to both copies, on the other hand, is one that slightly heightens the devotional element: the addition of communion to confession and a blessing as the essential spiritual armor for good Christians wanting to pass through the valley (“but fyrst they behouyn to ben . . . hoseled”).²⁰

The requirements of safe passage take a simpler form in Velser's Version, to turn now to the isotopes of the longer form: “but yet you should know that every good Christian who has right belief in the holy Trinity and who has confessed can go through the valley” (“aber doch sollend ir wissen das ain yetlich güter cristen, der rechten glouben hät in die hailige dryvältikait und der gebichtet haut der mag durch das tal gön”). Such small but significant changes are typical of this version, beginning with the valley's three names—“perilous,” “dark,” or “thunderous” (“verdúplich,” “finster,” “donres”)—the last two of which lack the supernatural expectations, both enticing and threatening, created by the replaced French names. There are too many such changes to notice here, but most of them differ from this initial toning down of certain

details in that they heighten either the rhetorical presentation or the devotional emphasis of the account, especially where Sir John's experiences are concerned. Unlike his French alter ego, who touches none of the riches so as not to put himself out of a devotion generated by fear, the German version's Knight claims never to have feared death or to have been much concerned with gold ("wan ich mich nie als ser besorget vor dem töd und achtat gar wenig des goldes"). Even for Sir John, this is quite a claim, and Velser later puts it to good use: while describing his "black mark" ("daz zaichen schwartz")—"which many people saw" ("das menig mensch gesenhen hät") in the eighteen years that he bore it—Sir John here claims that it vanished "when [he] gave up his haughty ways, and was sorry for [his] sins, and confessed and did penance" ("do ich von miner úppiger wiß ließ, und mich min súnd wurdent rúwen, und bychte und búßt, do vergieng mir das schwartz fleck")—a more elaborate transformation than the simple repentance and serving of God mentioned in the Continental Version.²¹

The most significant change in Velser's Version of the account, though, is the translator's own authenticating appearance in the middle. There is nothing like it in any other rendering of *The Book*. Fittingly, the appearance exists in two slightly different forms, varying with the two redactions of Velser's translation; the earlier one is somewhat longer and more informative. These two forms, moreover, are placed slightly differently on each occasion. In the second redaction, Velser makes his appearance right before Sir John does, while in the earlier redaction, he turns up just as the Knight and his fellows are setting out, but before we learn how many travelers departed and how many returned. Given the intervention's concerns, the earlier and more dramatic placement is also the more effective rhetorically, although Velser himself seems to have thought otherwise.

In both cases, however, he begins the added passage in essentially the same manner, by addressing the account's credibility much as Sir John does at the Khan's court, using the familiar "quasi-juridical" formula: "Also, before I proceed further, I Michel Velser, who put this book into German, want to say a little, and let no one be displeased. Everything I have read in this book is true, although I have not read what in my opinion would be as incredible as this material. Therefore I shall make it known to you that it is true" ("Item e ich fúrbas kum, so wil ich Michel Velser, der diß bûch zetútsch hát bracht, ain wenig sagen, und das laß sich niemen verdriessen. Es ist wár, alles das ich hab in disem bûch gelessen, so hon ich nit gelessen das inminem sinne als ungelöblich wár als diß matery. Da von wil ich uch kunt tûn das es wár ist").²² One might think that other passages would more likely have strained the translator's belief: for example, the earlier description of the Lamorians, who

practice economic and sexual communism, eat human children, and quote the Bible. But such was not the case. Velser appears to have thought the Knight's Dantesque journey the passage that most required personal corroboration.

By way of establishing his authority, Velser explains that he first read *The Book* while learning French in Piedmont, where he had access to a large library, and then recounts a fascinating anecdote, whose apropos allegory is only slightly more credible than Sir John's story (it may be true, in other words, but this is likely its ideal form):

und do laß ich in dem büch. Und das was in der vasten. Do kam ain barfüß zû mir, als ich wolt bychten, und der sach mich lessen in dem büch. Do fräget er mich von was sach es seyte. Do seyte ich im es. Do sprach er: "Komest du gen Kier in die statt, so wölt ich dir zôgen in unser liebry ain buch das unser gardion an dem töt bett gemacht hett. Da sich wunder und frag was er sag, wann er vil land hät erfaren enthalb meres." Und kürztlich ich sach das büch.²³

and at that time I was reading in this book. And that was in Lent. Then a Franciscan friar came to me, since I wanted to confess, and he saw me reading in this book. Then he asked me what it talked about. Then I told him it. Then he said, "If you come to the city of Chieri, I shall show you in our library a book that our guardian had made on his deathbed. See then and ask about the wonders that he saw, because he had traveled through many countries beyond the sea." And before long I saw the book.

In case anyone might disbelieve his testimonial, Velser explains that the book is located in the local Franciscan monastery—it was, he says, a chained book (and who knows but it is still there)—and that the monk came from a local family called "Raschier." If this is a reference to Odoric's *Relatio*, as it seems to be, it is apparently a dissembling one as well, for the account that Velser goes on to describe is not the friar's—at least not as it has come down to us. It is rather the friar's story made to correspond to its overwritten form in *The Book*—a circular mode of authentication, if there ever was one, and evidence that the *Mandeville*-author was not alone in his more disingenuous practices (the form of the Knight's name here, incidentally, may point to a copy of the *Relatio* with a rubric similar to that of the fifteenth-century manuscript that calls the friar "a comrade of the Knight Mandeville in India," "socius Militis Mendavil, per Indiam"):

Do vand ich in dem buch das er der was der mit herr Hannsen de Mandavilla was durch das tal gezôgen, er nampt in aber nit by dem namen, wann das er sprach mit ainem engelschen ritter, und das ir dryzehen warend, und do sie hin durch kamend dar, ir do nun nûn warend; und ain zaichen hett er mit im uß dem tal braucht, als her Hans. Und

do geloubt ich erst das es wer wär, wann ainer seit als der ander, wann das in die múnch fúr ainen sáligen man hettend. Da von lauß ich das beliben und kum an die ersten red.²⁴

Then I found in the book that the deceased friar had gone through the valley with Sir Hans de Mandavilla, although he did not refer to him by name, except he spoke with an English knight, and there were thirteen of them, and when they came through there, there were now nine of them; and he had brought a mark with him out of the valley, like Sir Hans. And only then did I believe that it was true, because one confirmed the other, since the monk took him for a holy man. Therefore I shall let this lie and come to the first subject [i.e., the story itself].

Of the two other versions that rework the story's longer form, only the Vulgate Latin has anything to compare with Velser's authenticating intervention. In this case, however, the intervention is ostensibly Sir John's work, and Odoric is openly named. What is not certain is whether this partly similar interpolation represents the work of the original redactor or of a later intermediary, since it is unclear whether it occurs in any of the extant manuscripts. It can, in any case, be found in two of the four known incunabular editions, as well as in Hakluyt's slightly later edition, a bibliographical situation which implies that, at the very latest, the interpolation had been added within a hundred years after the Latin redaction was first made—or rather, the interpolations, since the passage in question is only one of several corroborating references to the friar (there are about a dozen in Hakluyt's edition, the first of them occurring as *The Book* approaches Cathay). Some of these citations are simple and unobtrusive, as in this collation of names: "we came to Laucherim (Odoric calls it Leuyim)" ("venimus Laucherim, (Odericus appellat Leuyim)"). But others are more complex, as here.²⁵

Strikingly, Sir John's mention of Odoric in Hakluyt's edition occurs right before the Knight and his companions come on stage to journey into the valley: it occurs, that is, exactly where Velser makes his personal intervention in his second redaction. The difference between the two—apart from the fact that it is now Sir John who intervenes—is that the authenticating commentary follows the interpolation into the Latin text of Odoric's *entire* account, which provides one with a compressed, proleptic version of the Knight's own adventures. The commentary itself is brief, and it reveals Sir John in a new role: once and still the heroic and pious traveler, he is now also a pious and scholarly reader, who supplements his own "memoirs" by quoting from the *Mandeville*-author's own source (the sentence referred to here is Odoric's closing remark about being revered by the Saracens): "Odoric ended his book at this sentence here. *He did not endure as much as I did in the valley*. In the year of our Lord 1331, on January 9, he went to Christ . . . divine providence

approved his life and commended [it] immediately at the end, and since then through fine miracles, as is contained *in the quire, from which I took the concordances here above*" ("Odericus ad literam hic terminat suum librum: *non fuit tot perpressus in valle, sicut ego. Anno Domini 1331, Ianuarij nono, migravit ad Christum . . . cuius vitam statim in fine, & vsque nunc claris miraculis diuina providentia approbat, & commendat, prout continebatur in quaterno, a quo concordantias hic super seminavi*").²⁶

The account in which this self-aggrandizing gesture of homage occurs recognizably derives from the longer Continental form, although, as mentioned, the Latin text has been made longer still. In supplementing his French source, the Latin redactor does more than lengthen it; he also changes it in various ways, beginning at the beginning, where the valley is introduced as a "place both marvelous and terrible beyond all earthly things, and extremely far away" ("locus mirabilis pariter & terribilis, vltra omne mundanum, pene & procul"). This negative opening description stands in contrast not only to *The Book's* initial reference to "something marvelous," but also to the tendency of other translators to make their way into the account by referring to a "great marvel." Yet despite the Latin text's claim that the valley is as wonderful as it is terrible, it is the terror that receives attention. The noises, for example, that emerge as if from a "grant feste," are entirely different and conjure up other associations, as the valley "resounds" with the "roaring and tumult of thunder, tempests, yelling, and hissing, and of a different kind of terrible sounds, which a crowd of evil spirits produces there" ("resonant boatus & tumultus tonitruorum, tempestatum, clamorum, & stridorum diuersique generis sonituum terribilium, quos illic exercet multitudo spirituum malignorum").²⁷

In keeping with this transformed depiction of the valley as a much more infernal place (the tempting riches are mentioned last, and given little attention), the Vulgate Latin Version suggests that any passage through it is potentially purgatorial. What such a journey requires is more than confession and a blessing, however—the prerequisites mentioned in the Continental and Insular Versions. Like the Bodley redactor, but with more reason, the Latin translator makes proper communion crucial to safe passage in *The Book's* first account of travel into the valley, displacing and generalizing Sir John's later comment (in the longer form) about the protection that he and his fellows got from having received Christ's body beforehand. According to this highly elaborate explanation, Christians of sincere faith can pass securely through the valley only if they first put themselves in a state of salvation through true contrition and confession, are fortified with the mysteries of Christ's body and the sign of the cross, intend to do penance through their entry, and fear to enter—and even then their passage will not be free of labors, horrors, and

torments. It will, however, serve through the fears that it induces to purge the spiritually prepared traveler of all previous corrupt sins and protect him or her more than usual in the future (an assertion that makes a spiritual boast of Sir John's claim to have endured more than did Odoric in the valley).

After such an introduction, it comes as little surprise to find that the Latin redactor has reworked and extended the longer form of the Knight's own journey. The most notable change is the careful accounting of the four-league passage league by league—something that Sir John does in no other version. In another striking change, the Latin redactor turns a mystery into an implicit moral, when he has Sir John suggest why some travelers failed to make it through the valley: "the two Greeks and three Spaniards, who kept themselves apart from the others, were seen looking for another entrance, desiring to go ahead of us" (*"duo Graeci & tres Hispani, semetipsos ab alijs segregantes, visi sunt alium requirere introitum nos precedere cupientes"*). There are no such sectarian hares in search of a shortcut to salvation among the nine tortoises who remain in Sir John's company, all of them traveling "in silentio" with devout hearts. As they make their way one league at a time the horrors get worse, but the Knight cannot really describe those suffered toward the end, since by then he is too intent on remaining properly devout. One of the last things he can put into words is his experience in the middle of the valley of receiving a stunning blow, which left him with "a sign of the first magnitude" (*"in prima magnitudine signum"*) that lasted for eighteen years. Unlike the memorial mark received by his counterpart in other redactions, however, this one does not go away, and it looks rather different: "but even until now that place has shown a wound of the most various color, and will until it completely disappears with the body in the grave" (*"sed & vsque nunc variato colore locus ille demonstrat plenissime cicatricem, donec cum cadauere tota mutabitur in sepulchro"*).²⁸

In the longer French form of the journey and in Velser's rendering, the symbolic mark disappears when Sir John repents. This is a gesture that would have suited the Latin redactor's pious Knight even better, but he does not make it. Instead, he has Sir John make use of his presumably still sinful state at the end of the narrative as an occasion for praise and prayer, the move recalling the earlier one at the Khan's court when Sir John suddenly turns his marvelous description into a brief revival meeting. The difference is that the audience here is asked to pray not for pagan souls, but for the Knight himself, who becomes a figure for the difficulties of living a good Christian life even after one has undergone the most powerful spiritual experiences. Thus, right before concluding his relation by advising people not to enter the valley which he, "inquisitive" (*"curiosus"*), entered, and noting briefly—in a detail

unique to this version—that after the journey the travelers all went to nearby dwellings to mend their bodies with food and baths, the Knight turns to his audience with this ornately phrased request:

Nunc itaque obsecro magno cordis affectu, haec legentes & audientes ego, qui in illa hora quid erga me agebat misericordissimi Dei pietas ignorabam, vt velitis pro me, simul & mecum ex mentis intimo collaudare ispum Dominum, qui tunc de potestate tenebrarum illarum eripuit me indignum, & prout confido, a delictis iuuentutis me purgavit, quatenus de postea commissis, & committendis, mihi propitius fore dignetur, cum iam senior sim effectus. Quoniam etsi ex tunc proposui mores corrigere, ex nunc statuo in melius emendare, per filium eius Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum.²⁹

Now therefore I beseech with heartfelt affection those reading and hearing these things—I, who at that time did not know what devotion God most merciful was showing toward me—that for me and together with me, out of your innermost being, you will praise the very same Lord, who then delivered me, unworthy, from the power of that darkness, and as I confess, purged me of my youthful misdeeds, to the end that I be favorably judged in those things done afterwards and those to be done, because now I have become older. For although I have meant since then to correct my ways, I hope from now on to improve them, through his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Although he claims to have made use of the Vulgate Latin Version, Otto von Diemeringen, canon of Metz, produced the least spiritually inclined rendering of Sir John's journey. Making reference to the great marvel ("groß wunder") invoked at the beginning of most redactions, von Diemeringen's rendering has Sir John step forward with a comment that sets the mood for the account to come: "But I believe it be enchanted rather than natural" ("Doch gleuben ich e, daz es zeuberlich sye dan naturelich").³⁰ Like the Vulgate Latin, this version emphasizes the valley's terrors rather than its temptations, but omits entirely the passage about what Christians require for safe passage, makes no reference to the Eucharist's power, and does not turn the narrative into a purgatorial allegory. Much of the passing devotional commentary remains, to be sure, since it permeates the longer French form, but it now has a perfunctory feel to it.

The emphasis in this redaction is really on the story as a story—as a kind of pious romance in which the focus is split between the enabling piety and the sheer excitement of the adventure—and von Diemeringen fittingly ends it with the account of Sir John's black mark, the narrative and corporeal spot where spiritual sentiment and temporal action fuse almost perfectly. The account as a whole still requires closing, however, and the translator seems to

have thought that pointless advice would fit the bill, combining it with a displaced form of the vow that Sir John and company originally make in the thick of infernal darkness. The result is a brisk and breezy conclusion that reveals the strengths and weaknesses of this particular version: “And thus it seems to me, it would not be according to God’s will for one to enter. And afterwards we went, as we could, with labor, and came out with great suffering. And whoever made us all the greatest lords all over the world, we would not go in again, and we advise every decent person, who happens to come there, not to risk himself in there” (“Und darumb duncket mich, es were nyt mit gottes wyllen, das man darjn gee. Und darnach gingen wyr, als [w]yr mochtent, myt arbeytten und quament myt grossem leyde daruß. Und der uns alle dye grosten heren machte uber alle dye welt, wyr werent nyt wyder darin kommen und ratten keyn byderman, der dar komme, das er syche darin wagete”).³¹

One God, All Manner of Salvation

Direct advice of this or any other sort is a rare thing in *The Book* (except in the Vulgate Latin Version, which contains more than a few hortatory interpolations), and Sir John almost never claims to know God’s will. Yet practical guidance is, as we have seen, implicit in *The Book*’s several specular portraits of harmonious eastern societies, with their emphasis on order, justice, and obedience; and Sir John, on one occasion still to be discussed, is allowed some memorable words on God’s likely attitude toward non-Christians. That occasion is the theological coda to the *Mandeville*-author’s retelling of Alexander’s encounter with Dindimus, a retelling that has the ancient emperor involved in two chastening exchanges with the naturally faithful peoples of “Bragmey,” which some call the “Terre de Foy,” “Oxidrate,” and “Gysonophe.”³² Like the author’s accounts of almost ideal societies, the double portrait of these peoples offers implicit advice to *The Book*’s projected audience, this time about the power of simplicity, humility, and piety. We have already seen similar guidance given in the accounts of the Saracens and the Christians of Georgia, Abkhazia, and Armenia, but it will be helpful to recall here two of *The Book*’s reflective portraits of non-Christian faiths in the farther East, since it is that kind of portrait in particular that culminates in the legend and coda discussed below.

The *Mandeville*-author’s positive depictions of pagan piety likely begin with a brief sketch of Job developed from Odoric’s passing mention of the biblical figure early in his *Relatio* (“likely,” because the relevant part of the sketch is found in the unrelated textual traditions of the Insular and von Die-meringer Versions, but not in the related ones of the Continental and Velser

Versions, although it is clearly recalled in the theological coda in the Continental as well as the Insular Version). Yet whether authorial or not, the sketch is significant because it neatly captures the spirit in which the pagan world is viewed in the author's version of the multi-text: "although he was a pagan, nevertheless he served our Lord well *according to the law*, and our Lord readily received his service with pleasure" ("combien qil fuist paen, nientmoins il seruoit bien nostre Seignur *solonc la loy*, et nostre Seignur preignoit bien son seruice en grie").³³

The crucial word here is obviously "la loy," which could mean the law of nature (natural law), a concept that *The Book* occasionally invokes (mostly through references to "Dieu de nature"). The Cotton and the Egerton Versions, though, plausibly render "la loy" as "his lawe," presumably meaning Job's local pagan faith. The word in question is lacking in von Diemerin-gen's Version, but the passage's significance is the same—"he had such great patience in his poverty [in all his sufferings] that God listened to his prayers" ("hadde he so grote dult in deme armode [in allem syme lyden], dat en god irhorede")—and at least one version of this redaction supports God's gesture with the *Mandeville*-author's preferred authority, the Psalter: "as scripture says: 'I have never seen the just forsaken' [Ps. 37: 25]" ("alse de scrift sprikt: 'Numcquam vidi justum derelictum'"). In all of these references to Job, then, the point could not be clearer, and it has nothing to with the indifferent relativism ("A hint that one religion is as good (or as bad) as another") that Hamelius saw in the Cotton phrase "after his lawe." The point is rather that Job in his devotion—whether according to the law, natural law, or his own law—served the One True God; and, what is more important, that God accepted him for it. His pious service thus stands as rebuke to all Christians who fail in their practice, and as *The Book's* first example of God's acceptance of non-Christians.³⁴

Subsequent accounts of religious Otherness before the portrait of the "Terre de Foy" do not presume to know God's will, but they resemble it in normally depicting pagan practices as reasonable and piously motivated, rather than as erroneous, thus making the portraits useful as well as diverting. Particularly striking in this respect is the *Mandeville*-author's considered expansion of Odoric's comment that the peoples of "Chana" are "all idolaters, for they worship fire, snakes, and trees" ("tous idolatre, car ilz aourent le feu, les serpens et les arbres"). Unlike his source (or Polo, who habitually describes eastern peoples as idolaters), *The Book's* author thinks idolatry worthy of reflection—which is to say that the stay-at-home compiler has more curiosity about his human subjects as such than do the two genuine travelers. His first move is thus to undo the friar's criticism: "The peoples of this land have a [very] diverse law; for some worship the sun, and others fire, others

trees, others snakes, or the first thing they meet in the morning" ("Les gentz de celle terre ont [moult] diuerse loy; qar ascuns adorent le solail, et ascuns le feu, ascuns arbres, ascuns serpentz, ou la primere chose qils encontre la matyne").³⁵

Were this all that the author had done with Odoric's text here, we might be justified in taking Hamelius's cynical view of him, since the revised comment not only replaces idolatry with diversity; it seems to make diversity end in the absurdity of a random faith. But it is not all. The author also adds a long commentary on religious issues, replacing Odoric's memoir of the martyrdom of four Franciscans with an account of the worshipped objects; the passage as a whole serves to make the "diuerse loy" look motivated and rational, if still "primitiue et naturelle," like the Jacobite mode of confession.

Before it does this, though, the text makes an unusual distinction that must account for the neutrality of Sir John's explanations: "And they [some] worship simulacra; and some worship idols. But between simulacra and idols there is a difference" ("Et [les aucuns] adorent simulacres; et ascuns adorent ydoles. Mais entre symulacres et ydoles y ad difference"). The difference is simple but significant: "simulacra are images made in the likeness of something natural . . . and 'idol' is a certain image made by the foolish will of man that one cannot find among natural things" ("symulacres sont ymages faites a la semblance dascune chose naturelle . . . et ydole est ascun ymage faite de fole voluntee de homme, qe homme ne purroit trouer entre les choses naturelles").³⁶ Eventually, as *The Book* is drawing to a close, the *Mandeville*-author will again press this distinction into service in order to separate some pagan practices from the Christian veneration of saints' images. Here, however, the distinction works to divide acceptable from unacceptable forms of non-Christian worship—a separation that medieval writers were loath to make.

By insisting on this division near the beginning of his tour through the pagan world, the author opens up a discursive space within which religious Otherness can be viewed sympathetically, and once having established that space, he uses it several times. In the present context, the distinction is used not only to explain practices that must have looked to medieval people like the basest error, but also to bring the apparent idolators within the fold of monotheism, placing them (like the Saracens) closer to the Christian Truth than one might have suspected. The wording of the passage that does the latter varies in the Continental and Insular Versions, but both texts make the same point: that the local people do not confuse their simulacra with gods or God, because they acknowledge the creator "Dieu de nature"; rather, they worship the heros (such as Hercules) whom the images represent, because their heroism is a sign of the "grace especiale de Dieu."³⁷

What seems like idolatry, then, is actually a kind of metonymic monotheism, in which specific objects are worshiped because they reveal God's power. God here is clearly the Christian God, but is called "Dieu de nature" because the local peoples exist, as it were, before revelation. The geographical distance separating these peoples from Christendom, that is, indicates their place in History, where History is understood according to the widely accepted Pauline tradition of three ages: "ante legem" (the time before the Mosaic law), "sub lege" (the time under that law), and "sub gratia" (the time of grace, inaugurated by the Resurrection). The peoples of Chana evidently live "ante legem," which is also the time of natural law, when some peoples intuitively know God's demands: "When peoples who do not have the law, *naturally* do what is of the law . . . they reveal the law's writing in their hearts" ("Cum enim gentes, quae legem non habent, *naturaliter* ea quae legis sunt faciunt . . . qui ostendunt legis scriptum in cordibus suis"; adapting Romans 2: 14–15).³⁸

Since he is more open than Paul to religious diversity, and more inclined to view some forms of it as proto-Christian, the *Mandeville*-author now turns from the peoples' profession of faith in "Dieu de nature" to their explanations of why they worship certain objects—a task made easier by the fact that they have just defended the form of image worship most likely to be understood by Christians (the worship of ancient heroes). Essentially, their explanations depend on Paul's claim that God can be known through his creation (Rom. 1: 19–20). The people provide a rationale for each object worshipped—the sun for its great utility, for example—and then claim that its goodness derives from God: "because he has given it [the sun] the greatest powers in the world, this is good reason, as they say, that one should honor it and show it reverence" ("pur ceo ly ad il done pluís grandes vertues el monde, si est bien resoun, si come ils dient, qe homme le honore et face reuerence").³⁹

The most significant moment in *The Book*'s commentary comes in its less neutral discussion of the worship of "bone encontres," which clearly distinguishes pagan from Christian doctrine, in order to set up a play of critical mirrors wherein both pagans and Christians can be rebuked. Having had the local people justify their practice as honoring the "grace de Dieu," the *Mandeville*-author then has Sir John note that "ascuns des Cristiens" also worship portents, a remark that opens out into a rhetorically subtle critique of misbelief: "And since the Christians have such a belief, who are nurtured with all holy teaching [who are nurtured with all holy teaching and should know it], it is no marvel that the pagans, who have no good teaching, except that of their nature, more widely believe this out of their simplicity" ("Et puis qe luy Cristiens ont tiele creance, qi sont abeuez de tote seinte doctrine [qui en

sont abeures et sceuent toute sainte doctrine], ceo nest nient merueille qe ly paiens, qi nont point de bone doctrine, forsqe de lour nature, y croient pluis largement pur lour simplese”). Reinforcing this double-directed critique is Sir John’s reaffirmation of the One True God, which follows his startling claim that while among the pagans and Saracens he himself has seen prognostication appear to work: “But one ought not therefore to place any belief at all in such a thing, but always have steady hope in our Lord[, who can do and undo whenever it pleases him]” (“Mes pur ceo ne doit homme pas de tot mettre sa creance en tiele chose, mes totdez auoir ferme esperance en nostre Seigneur[, qui peut faire et deffaie quan quil ly plaist]”).⁴⁰

This is simple advice, and it is effectively echoed in the *Mandeville*-author’s retelling of the Alexander and Dindimus story, which depicts a pagan piety so simple and pure that it is hard to distinguish from an ascetic sort of Christianity.⁴¹ The retold story occurs in a long passage that falls into two main parts, the second of which both repeats and supplements the first, and each of these two parts itself falls into two smaller sections, such that the whole is composed of four sections of about equal length arranged chiastically (A B :: B’ A’). The first of these two main parts begins with a description of the fine isle and good people of “Bragmey,” focusing especially on the people’s devotion and acceptance by God; and this description is followed by a brief narrative of their correspondence with Alexander, who accepts their forcefully expressed resistance to his desire to conquer them. The second part, in contrast, begins with a brief narrative of the conversation between Alexander and the inhabitants of “Oxidrate” and “Gysonophe” that leaves the great king feeling utterly abashed; and this “repeated” narrative issues in what I call the theological coda, where Sir John proclaims that God loves all the devout, regardless of their faith (a claim that anticipates *The Book*’s brief, and not quite so bold, ecumenical conclusion). The second story, then, does not merely repeat the first; it represents a significant supplement to it, laying the rhetorical and ideological ground for the culminating statement about non-Christian salvation.

Like several eastern peoples, the inhabitants of “Bragmey,” or “la Terre de Foy,” are introduced as good “according to their belief” (“solonc lour creaunce”), but they stand apart in the perfection of their goodness and by virtue of the fact that their behavior is explicitly attributed to “natural law”:

Et, come bien qils ne soyent Cristiens et qils nayent *ley parfite*, nient moinz de *loy naturele* ils sount pleins de toutes vertues, et si fyent [tous] vices et toutz malices et toutz pecchez. Qar ils ne sount orgillous, ne coueitous, ne perisous, nenuious, ne corocious, ne glotons, ne luxurious; et si *ne fount a autri chose qils ne voillent qe homme*

lour face. Et en ceo cas *ils acomplissent les x. commandementz*, et si ne nount cure dauoir ne de richesse. Et si ne mentent point ne ne iurent point pur nul occasioun, mes dient simplement oil et nenil; qar ils dient qe qy iure il voet desceiuere soun prosme; et pur ceo quantqes ils fount, ils fount saunz serement.⁴²

And although they are not Christians and do not have *complete law*, nevertheless by *natural law* they are full of all virtues, and they flee [all] vices and all malice and all sins. For they are not proud, nor avaricious, nor slothful, nor envious, nor wrathful, nor gluttons, nor lustful; and *they do to others only what they would want done to them* [cf. Matt. 22: 39]. And in this respect *they fulfill the ten commandments*, and they care nothing for possessions or riches. And they do not lie at all nor swear at all on any occasion, but say simply, yes it is, and no it is not; for they say that whoever swears wants to deceive his neighbor; and therefore they do whatever they do without swearing.

Good faith, then, is a matter more of practice than belief, since doing what nature teaches amounts to doing what God requires. The ultimate reward of such piety is of course salvation, but in a comment that must have resonated deeply with *The Book's* fourteenth-century audiences, the text suggests that natural goodness may also bring divine worldly rewards: no tempestuous weather, plague, war, famine, or like troubles, "as we [have] many times over here for our sins. Wherefore it appears that God loves them and willingly accepts their belief and their good works" ("si come nous [auons] mointefoitz par de cea pur nos pecches. Pur quoy y piert qe Dieu les ayme et prent a gre lour creauce et lour bons ourez"). No other eastern mirror looks quite like this.⁴³

From this chastising and challenging reflection, *The Book* turns to its two brief narratives of Alexander's heart-changing encounters with the peoples of "Bragmey," and "Oxydrate" and "Gysonophe." The first of these is vaguely set "in former times" ("en le temps iadis"), the second in no historical time whatsoever—which suggests that they are meant to be exemplary rather than documentary.⁴⁴ Both encounters, moreover, are compressed to their contextually relevant essentials from the copious material given in *The Book's* likely sources (Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* and the prose *Roman d'Alexandre*, respectively), rather than amplified like most accounts (though some of the actual borrowings are expanded). They also undo their sources' tendency to show Alexander in a positive light, as the *Mandeville*-author follows the common medieval habit of reducing the emperor's part to a perfunctory defense of his actions and expanding the criticism and counter-arguments of his ascetic opponents. Significantly, Alexander's opponents are shown in both accounts to be the entire community, which speaks with one devout voice in resisting his desire to conquer them (Dindimus is never named). The crucial differ-

ence between the “repeated” stories thus appears in the emperor’s response: after his exchange with the Bragmeyans, “he thought that he would cause too much harm” (“il pensoit qil ferroit trop de mal”), but after his exchange with the other two peoples, “Alexander was utterly abashed” (“Alisaundre fust tout abaihiiz”).⁴⁵

The exchanges that prompted these different responses are themselves appropriately distinct, and they are arranged hierarchically as well: the first praises the simple life, while the second attacks Alexander for proudly attempting to subdue the world, instead of preparing for his death. The latter passage even contains a touch of *contemptus mundi*, which might seem out of place in a book devoted to the world’s marvelous diversity, but the hint is much toned down from its source and compensated for by the fact that the critique is shorter than the preceding praise. This paeon to the ascetic life comes from Dindimus’s first letter in Vincent, supplemented with details from later letters about the Brahmins’ dietary and sexual continence. As always, the material is cut to fit its new context, here through the addition of remarks on the Bragmeyans’ perpetual peace—a desirable thing in fourteenth-century Christendom—and their obedience, the latter a virtue praised in all of *The Book’s* idealizing depictions of eastern societies:⁴⁶

Speculum Historiale. Regem habemus,
non pro iustitia, sed pro nobilitate seru-
anda.

We have a king, not for justice, but to
preserve nobility.

The Book. Et si aoums vn roy, noun pas
pur iustice faire, qar il ne troueroit nul
forsfesant, mes pur noblesse garder et *pur*
aprendre qe nous soioms obeissantz.

And we have a king, not in order to main-
tain justice, for he would find no criminal,
but to preserve nobility and *to teach*
that we should be obedient.

Having profited from this exchange, Alexander enters “Oxidrate” and “Gysonophe” not to demand submission, but to acknowledge the peoples’ “bone foy” and their “grante loyalte” by asking whether he could reward them. Repeating the Bragmeyans’ claim that they have all the riches they need in their simple diet, they ask for immortality. To this unlikely request, Alexander responds with a sensible answer: “that he could not do it, for he was mortal, just as they were” (“qe ceo ne poait il faire, qar il estoit mortel, si come ils estoient”). Until now, the exchange has followed the prose *Roman* fairly closely, but the *Mandeville*-author here departs significantly from his source by expanding the peoples’ rejoinder—“Since you are mortal, how come you

go traveling through the world and doing all manner of harm?” (“Puis que tu es mortuus, comment vas tu corant par le monde et faisant tant de manieres de maus?”)—with matter that recalls the introduction to the “Terre de Foy,” and he suppresses Alexander’s long final answer (that God will not allow him to rest, although he would like to): “‘And why then[, since you know that you are a mortal man]’, they asked, ‘are you so proud and so haughty [and so arrogant] that you would have the whole world subject to you, [just exactly] as if you were God [immortal], and you had no limit to your life, neither a day, nor a time’” (“‘Et pur quoy douncques[, puis que tu sces que tu es homs mortel]’, firent ils, ‘es tu si orgoillous et si fiers [et si outrecuidie] qe tu voeuz toute le mounde mettre en ta subieccioun, [tout] auxi [bien] qe tu feussez Dieu [immortel], et si nas terme de ta vie ne iour ne heure’”).⁴⁷

Such a rebuke ought to have sufficed, especially with its allusion to Matthew 24: 36 and 25: 13 about God’s unknown powers, but the *Mandeville*-author has the peoples of “Oxydrate” and “Gysonophe” continue for several more sentences, ending with a lesson especially relevant to Alexander, as well as to all overweening Christian princes: “Thus you ought to consider that no one is immortal but God who created everything. [Wherefore you ought not to covet so much, for it will not be able to remain with you]” (“Si dois penser qe nuls nest immortels forsqe Dieu qi tout crea. [Pour quoy tu ne deusses mie tant conuoitier, car il ne te pourra demourer]”).⁴⁸

This is the rebuke that left Alexander “utterly abashed,” and it is conventionally fitting enough that the *Mandeville*-author could have ended the encounter with it, or, as in the Continental Version, with his departure (as Milton ends *Paradise Lost* with the chastened first couple’s departure from a perfection they could not master). Instead, though, he has Sir John emerge to praise the peoples’ natural faith in the same terms used to celebrate that of the Bragmeyans, a move that allows for an easy transition to the theological coda, which makes plain the implications of many of *The Book*’s portraits of pagan piety since the praise of Job in the Insular Version:

Et, come bien qe cestez gentz neyent les [xii.] articles de la foy si qe nous auoms, nient meinz, pur lour bone foy naturele et pur lour bone entencioun, ieo quide estre ser-teins qe Dieu les ayme et qe preigne lour seruice en gree, si come il fait de Iob, qi fust paiens, nequident il le tenoit bien pur soun loial sergeaunt. Et pur ceo, come bien qe il y at plusours loys diuersez parmy le mounde, ieo croi qe Dieu ayme toutdis ceux qi layment et seruent humblement en verite et en loialte et qi desprysent la vayn glorie de ceo mounde [pour lamour de luy], si qe ceste gentz fount et Iob auxi le fesoit.⁴⁹

And although these people do not have the [twelve] articles of the faith such as we have, nevertheless, on account of their good natural faith and of their good intention,

I consider it to be certain that God loves them and willingly accepts their service, as he did Job's, who was pagan, despite which he took him as his loyal servant. And therefore, although there are many diverse laws amidst the world, I believe that God always loves those who love him and serve humbly in truth and in loyalty and who despise the vain glory of this world [for love of him], such as these people do and Job also did.

This was not an entirely unorthodox position to take in the mid-fourteenth century, but it was not one that could be advanced without argument either. Accordingly, Sir John offers a series of scriptural, ecclesiastical, and pagan witnesses hierarchically arranged in descending order (most of them cited in untranslated Latin, although their significance is explicitly interpreted in two cases). The testimony of "nostre Seignur" comes first, taken from three separate sources: his prophet Hosea (8: 12, considerably adapted), "aillours," or elsewhere (unidentified, perhaps a tendentious summary of Psalm 8), and from the gospel (John 10: 16). This third witness, the first genuine scriptural passage adduced, is also the first to be glossed by Sir John: "*I have other sheep that are not of this fold*, which is to say that he has other servants than [those] under Christian law" ("*Alias oues habeo, que non sunt ex hoc ouili*, cest a dire qil auoit autres seruantz qe souz la ley Cristiene").

Confirming God's testimony is Peter's vision at Jaffa (Acts 10: 9–16), the central moment of which (the apostle's refusal to eat "unclean beasts") is narrated in French, whereupon the angel steps forward with the appropriate Latin "proof": "And this angel said to him, *Do not call unclean what God has cleansed* [Acts 10: 15]. And this was a sign that no earthly people is to be despised [or judged] on account of their diverse laws[, but they are to be prayed for]. For we do not know those whom God loves and those whom he hates[, for he hates no creature that he has made]" ("Et cely aungel ly dit, *Non dicas immunda que Deus mundauit*. Et ceste estoit vne signe qe homme ne doit nuls gentz terriens pur lour diuerses lois auoir en despit ne nulli [iugier, mais prier pour euls]. Qar nous ne sauoms les queux Dieu ayme et les quex il hait[, car il ne hait nulle creature quil ait faicte]"). In the Continental Version, the use of Acts is taken one step further, as Peter's sermon to the Gentiles (Acts 10: 34–35) is also adduced to prove that there is salvation "extra ecclesiam." The cited passage is contextually appropriate, and so may be the *Mandeville*-author's work, but it contains an interpolation that is unusually tolerant of the Jews: "And therefore St. Peter, when he knew the meaning of this vision, said, *Now in truth I have learnt that God is no respecter of persons, nor does he distinguish between Jews and gentiles, but in all peoples whoever fears him and serves justice is acceptable to him*" ("Et pour ce disoit Saint Pierre, quant il sceut significacion de ceste auision, *Nunc in ueritate comperi quia non est acceptor personarum Deus*,

nec distinguit inter Iudeos et gentes, sed in omni gente que timet illum et operatur iusticiam acceptus est illi").⁵⁰

With this citation—or, in the Insular Version, the previous one—Sir John has finished calling on scriptural authority, and now turns briefly to an institutional proof of God's openness: the fact that when the *De profundis*, or burial service, is said, it asks for prayers for the souls of all the dead ("*pro animabus omnium defunctorum pro quibus sit exorandum*").⁵¹ The burial service interests the *Mandeville*-author less than the next and last proof, though, since that allows Sir John to conclude the account of pagan piety in "Bragmey," "Oxidrate," and "Gysonophe" not with numberless deaths, but with a unique birth. Stating that God loves these people for their loyalty, the Knight makes perhaps the most startling announcement of all in this series of bold claims:

En celles isles prophetizerent lincarnacioun nostre Seignur Ihesu Crist, coment il deuoit naistre dun pucelle, m^l m^l m^l [iiii^m] aunz ou plus auaunt qe nostre Seignur fust nees de la virgine Marie. Et croient bien lincarnacioun parfitement, mes ils ne scieuent bien la manere coment suffri passiou et mort pur nous[, ne ses euuangles, ne les oeuvres, si bien comme nous faisons].

In those isles they prophesied the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how he was to be born of a maiden, three [four] thousand years or more before our Lord was born of the virgin Mary. And they believe perfectly well the incarnation, but they do not know the manner in which he suffered pain and death for us[, nor his gospels, nor the works, such as we have performed].

Significantly, this prophecy echoes one mentioned near *The Book's* beginning: the pre-Christian testimonial found in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek on a gold plate recovered from a body—said to be "Hermes le sage"—exhumed by a Greek emperor in Constantinople's Church of St. Sophia. The difference is that the former prophecy was made two (not three or four) thousand years before Christ's birth, a difference to which one editor has drawn amused attention: "The 2000 years . . . have now become 3000 or more . . . !"⁵²

This editorial exclamation point will strike some as the appropriate response, but there is likely more to the change than hyperbole, just as there is more to the citation of the two prophecies than religious marvel-mongering. The numerical difference, I would argue, is both rational and ideologically functional given the geographical and textual location of each prophecy. Placed at opposite ends of the text and the East, the two passages neatly frame *The Book's* tour of the non-Christian world in a way that allows the audience to imagine a universal Christendom, presumably as a consolation for the shrunken state of their world.⁵³ In addition, since time in *The Book* is gen-

erally a function of space, such that the farthest East represents the world's beginning (the Earthly Paradise), it stands to reason that the peoples located farthest away from Latin Christendom would have foretold Christ's birth earlier than those closest to it. As for the *Mandeville*-author's interest in pre-Christian prophecies, it is important to note that this was a common concern of religious thinkers since about the beginning of the Crusades: Peter Abelard, Roger Bacon, and Thomas Bradwardine, for example, all regarded such prophecies as evidence of universal knowledge of the One True God. What the *Mandeville*-author does is to press this learned theological claim in a vernacular survey of the East—a survey which, in one critic's view, looks almost like “a systematic work on comparative religion” arranged geographically, so that it proceeds from sectarian Christian division at Constantinople toward naturally diverse unity in the direction of Paradise.⁵⁴

Limiting the Praise of Pagan Piety, Avoiding Theological Speculation

Not all *The Book*'s intermediaries appear to have shared the *Mandeville*-author's generally open-minded concern with the ultimate consequences of pagan piety, nor did they always follow his habit of using the non-Christian world as a critical mirror of Latin Christendom. In contrast to the Cotton, Defective, Egerton, and Velsler Versions, which mostly work with the authorial grain and thus preserve the text's specular and speculative representations of pagan piety, the Bodley, Metrical, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin Versions have their own ideological designs on *The Book* and its portraits. Unlike the Bodley and Metrical redactions, which favor stories and information above all, the von Diemeringen and Vulgate Latin renderings maintain *The Book*'s interest in pagan religious practices, but each turns it to very different ideological account. The long portrait of pagan piety in Chana, for example, which disappears from the Bodley and Metrical redactions, is reduced in the German and Latin texts to a list of the objects worshipped by the local peoples, who no longer say anything in their own defense, but that is all the two redactions have in common here. In the von Diemeringen Version, the radically reduced account is supplemented by a list of the classical gods and takes its place in the redactor's fifth and final “book,” which contains compressed forms of some of *The Book*'s scattered portraits of religious diversity, whereas the Latin Version leaves the list in place, using it to explain the sentence that introduces the now much shortened account: “they are of the most infidel Pagans” (“Hi sunt infidelissimi Paganorum”).⁵⁵

Among the four translations that transmit the entire account of Chana, only the Egerton Version makes changes that can be interpreted, like those in the German and Latin, as resistance to the *Mandeville*-author's interested presentation of pagan piety, since it leaves out the crucial conclusion: the criticism of Christians who believe in omens and the exhortation that one should instead have "ferme esperance en nostre Seignur." There may also be minor resistance in the Defective Version's unexpected claim that idols and simulacra are the same thing ("& som worshyp simulacres and ydollis but bytwene simulacres and ydols is no difference"), but since the text of this version is riddled with gaps, the modification is more likely to have a material than an ideological cause.⁵⁶

Surprisingly, the Defective Version contains no important changes in the account of Alexander's encounters with the naturally faithful, but the theological coda lacks two notable elements whose absence (whatever its cause) strengthens the coda's case for religious tolerance. The first missing element is the second of "oure lorde's" three "scriptural" testimonials to his embrace of the world's religious diversity: the unidentified and presumably unbiblical phrase "Who has subjected the whole world to his laws" ("Qui totum orbem subdit suis legibus"). The second absent element is the prophecy of Christ's incarnation with which the coda concludes, and its absence means that the coda now ends on a quite different note: "we wote neuer whom god loueth. and whom god hateth."⁵⁷

The Cotton and Egerton Versions contain no changes to the Alexander legend, and its coda is as striking as the latter omission, but both modify details in ways that mostly enhance the larger passage's persuasive force. In the Cotton text, for example, Alexander decides to leave the Bragmeyans in peace not because "he thought he would cause too much *harm*" ("il pensoit qil ferroit trop de *mal*"), but because "he thoughte þat he scholde do gret *synne*," and he departs from the Oxidratans and Gysonophes not just "utterly abashed" ("tout abaihez"), but "gretly astoneyed + abayst + all confuse." The only place in fact where the text might work against its source is in the claim that "god loueth hem [the Bragmeyans] + is plesed with hire creance *for* hire gode dedes" — where the English differs subtly from the French: "God loves them and willingly accepts their belief *and* their good works" ("Dieu les ayme et prent a gre lour creauce *et* lour bons ourez").⁵⁸

This bold claim appears not to have troubled the Egerton redactor, who rearranges it slightly to emphasize faith over works: "Godd . . . es wele payd of þaire liffyng and of þaire fayth." As usual, this version makes many more small yet significant changes than does the Cotton, enhancing, for instance, the presentation of the ascetic life by adding evaluative adjectives to words like

“le corps,” which it renders as the “wricched body” and the “feble body,” or “noz charoignes” (“our flesh”), which it renders as “oure caytiff carayne.” The Egerton Version does resemble the Cotton, however, in modifying one bold theological claim, partly contradicting itself in the process. Whereas the coda in the Insular Version interprets the biblical text “*Alias oues habeo, que non sunt ex hoc ouili*” to mean that God has more servants than Christians alone (“*cest a dire qil auoit autres seruantz qe souz la ley Cristiene*”), the Egerton text emphasizes the provisional nature of this open-armed interpretation: “*þat es to say, ‘I hafe oþer schepe, whilk er nozt of þis falde’, as if he said ‘Oþer seruandes I hafe þan er vnder Cristen lawe’*.”⁵⁹

There is perhaps a similar reticence in Velser’s Version, which makes one large and significant change to this late part of the text. It omits the theological coda, ending the whole account with a truncated rendering of Alexander’s second humbling lesson, but still retains part of the account’s original ideological force, because it is now placed at the text’s close, where it leads into Sir John’s final statement on religious matters: that all peoples with reason have “some articles of our belief” (“etlich artickel unsers globen”).⁶⁰

Unlike the modifications made by Velser or the translators of the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton texts, the changes made by *The Book*’s more independent-minded redactors do more than alter nuances of meaning in the Alexander legend and its coda; they also prevent the passage from serving its original function of summing up the text’s dispersed portraits of pagan piety and opening God’s arms to all the world’s devout—a fact that the Bodley, Metrical, and Latin redactors appear to have recognized, since their versions all omit the theological coda.⁶¹ As for the legend itself, only the Bodley Version transmits it more or less intact, leaving out mainly those details necessary to its original function: for example, the claim that the Bragmeyans fulfill the ten commandments and live in the “Terre de Foy.” Even so, the account as a whole still comes across as an exemplum of simple piety, especially in the Musaeo manuscript, which ends not with Alexander’s abashed departure, but with the Oxidratans’ sermon on life’s transitory nature.⁶²

The legend also retains some of its exemplary force in the Vulgate Latin, Metrical, and von Diemeringen Versions, but each of them uses it to point a different sort of moral. The Latin redaction, for example, makes Alexander’s defeat a sign of God’s attitude toward warmongers. Reducing the *Mandeville*-author’s double account to the first story, this version still presents the “Bracmanni” as naturally good, if also naturally simple: “Although they are not Christians, they nevertheless live in the best natural way. They appear also to be uncouth and unprepared, simple, and ignorant of all the arts” (“*Hij licet Christiani non sunt, viuunt tamen naturali optimo more. Rudes enim*

& incomparati, simplices, & inscij omnis artis apparent"). But then it makes them fear nothing from Alexander except the loss of their good peace ("pax bona")—they do not defend the simple life to him—and he has no rhetorically persuasive change of heart; rather, he simply turns back, aided by the same divine will that allowed him to enclose the Jews of the Ten Tribes, and soon after he dies, becoming a negative exemplum of the peacebreaker: "and so it came about by divine will that the fierce king turned to others, and shortly thereafter met his downfall, because the Lord scatters those who desire war, and peace remains in many places to those who are attentive" ("sicque diuino nutu est actum vt Rex truculentus ad alia se verteret, atque in breui postmodum caderet, quia dissipat Dominus eos, qui bella volunt, & istis manet pax multa diligentibus eam").⁶³

The von Diemeringen Version likewise makes Alexander a negative exemplum, but in order to distinguish his pagan imperialism from Ogier the Dane's charitable Christian expansion: "When Sir Ogier of Denmark won all the lands and heard their virtues spoken of, he left them in their peace and had a great liking for them. But when Alexander won the lands, he intended that they should be subject to him" ("Do her Oiger von Denemarken alle dye lande gewan und von jren dogenden horte sagen, do liess er sy in jren freden und hatte grosse liebe zu jn. Abir do Allexander die lande gewan, der wolde, daz sy jme underdenigh solden syn"). What motivates Ogier's respect, according to this version, is that the Bragmeyans "believe in god of nature and do not disbelieve in Jesus Christ's divine power" ("Sye glaubent an goit von natûren und misset gleubent nit Ihesus Cristus gotlicher crafft").⁶⁴ In fact, they and the pious peoples of Oxidrate and Gysonophe are so close to Christianity that they are excellent candidates for conversion—an argument that the *Mandeville*-author's original makes much earlier about the Saracens (whose religious beliefs are discussed in von Diemeringen's fifth and final "book" without reference to their potentially easy conversion). Significantly, this argument occurs here in the only part of the theological coda that the German translator chose to render, the pre-Christian prophecy of Jesus:

Und ich gleuben, daz die lude god vil [nae] syn dan vil cristen [das dye lute viel besser synt dan viel cristen]. Und sy wurden gar lichtlich gut [cristen], der by jn wanderte und jn den rechten glauben offenbarte, wante die geburt unsers herren *Jhesu Cristi* wart wol [drei]dusent jar vor gewyssaget von [iren] heiligen eynsedelen und andern guden luden. Und sie gleuben [wol], das god menschliche nature an sich genomen haben. Abir von syme lÿden und von syme dode enwyssen sy nicht zeü sagen.⁶⁵

And I believe that the people are much [closer] to God than many Christians [that the people are much better than many Christians]. And they would easily become good

[Christians], if someone traveled to them and showed them the right belief, for the birth of our lord Jesus Christ was prophesied three thousand years before [the fact] by [their] holy hermits and other good people. And they believe [well] that God took human nature upon himself. But they do not know how to speak about his passion and his death.

Like the Vulgate Latin and von Diemeringen Versions, the Metrical Version also remakes the Alexander legend as an anti-war story, but its classical conqueror differs from theirs in being a positive exemplum of the virtuous pagan, while *The Book's* originally virtuous pagans seem already to have been the targets of missionary activity, since they appear here as the most devout Christians: "of alle the puple in cristiante / The best lyuers," distinguished as they are by their love, charity, peace, and meek service to God "in penaunce and praier daie and nyzte." Conflating the original double telling into one, the English verse redaction concludes with an explicitly biblical moral, glossing Alexander's departure with the words of John 2: 13: "*Iudicium sine misericordia illi qui non facit misericordiam*" ("Those who show no mercy will be judged without mercy").⁶⁶

John's famous words are not those with which the *Mandeville*-author chose to end his important account of pagan piety, but they are largely apropos, and they have the potential to provoke moral reflection. What they lack, however, is the potential to stimulate reflection on the question of religious difference (which the Metrical Version simply erases from the account). In the brief space that remains before *The Book's* close, the author raises this question of Otherness once more, as if adding a theological coda to the Alexander legend's coda. The difference is that the added coda partly qualifies the earlier passage's openness to difference, since it criticizes some forms of pagan error by distinguishing them from Christian truth. The *Mandeville*-author's text does not return here to the Christian chauvinism so forcefully expressed in the exordium, but it does reassert the superiority of the Christian faith in a way that both embraces and appropriates the non-Christian world into the earlier chapters of the world's One True Story—as though to suggest that the diverse world contained within Sir John's recollected book is also necessarily contained by the revealed Book of Books.

Having Come to Rest Despite Myself

AT THE END OF ITS TOUR OF Prester John's Land and surrounding isles, as we saw in the previous chapter, *The Book* takes its projected audience still farther east to the dark and mountainous region near the world's beginning, where it offers them a distant glimpse of the mossy wall enclosing their original homeland. In a text that set out from the farthest "parties doccident," and that traces the itinerary of no one traveler in particular, this last inaccessible destination would have been a fitting place to bring the vicarious journey to a close. It is not, however, the place where the *Mandeville*-author chose to conclude.

Instead, he adds three more stops to *The Book*'s itinerary, prolonging the marvelous survey a little further, before having Sir John break off somewhere near the Great Khan's territory. At that point, the Knight asks his audience to reflect on the world's religious diversity, reaffirming its underlying spiritual unity, yet unexpectedly concluding this reaffirmation—and the entire recollected "divisament dou monde"—with a comment on non-Christian idolatry that recalls something of Polo's negative tone. Once Sir John has (re)established his orthodoxy in this way, the *Mandeville*-author has him undertake the task of easing the audience out of the far-away textual world in which they have been moving for so long, addressing them with a brief peroration first on his account's incompleteness because of the sheer number of "choses estranges" "over there," and then on the unhappy personal circumstances in which he put his book together. Finally, he sends the book into the world in good medieval fashion, with a short prayer.

No less than the exordium, whose multiple transformations we witnessed in chapter 2, *The Book*'s five-stage closing movement rarely passed untouched through the hands of its medieval intermediaries, and this is especially true of the personal peroration. In England, for example, Sir John's last words were supplemented by at least three redactors with a passage explaining how the

pope confirmed his book as he returned through Rome. On the Continent, in contrast, two redactors brought the Knight to Liège for a twilight reunion with a physician known to him from the Sultan's court, and one of them made the physician—whom we know to have had a genuine extra-textual existence—responsible for convincing Sir John to compile his book. In the event, this double account of *The Book's* composition proved persuasive enough that some scholars used it to launch a quest for the *Mandeville*-author's real identity. Rather than take up the still-unfinished quest in the present chapter, though, I examine these two different and misleading supplements to an originally misleading conclusion, as well as other conclusions that are not quite so disingenuous, in order to see how they work to close the text's world.

Neither Farther Forward, Nor All the Way Back

Following his brief description of the Earthly Paradise, where one might have expected him to stop, Sir John announces the continuation of his instructive itinerary by way of a question first raised after the visit to Lamory: the possibility of traveling still farther east so as to return home by passing around the earth. Yet since *The Book* represents not an imaginary, but an imagined journey based on the itineraries recorded by two genuine travelers, and since there were no records of an actual circumnavigation (although there was perhaps the memory of the Vivaldo brothers' disappearance into the Atlantic in 1291, after they had set out for India by the Cape route), the *Mandeville*-author has here to forgo describing a typical round trip. The best he can do—and this is what he does—is to have Sir John insist once and for all that such a tour is possible, and then turn the itinerary back in the direction from which it had come.

At this point, the *Mandeville*-author returns for the final time to Odoric's itinerary, picking up the material omitted in *The Book's* passage from Prester John's Land into the infernal valley. Yet all that remains of the friar's relation are three brief and unrelated descriptions, the third of which is a misplaced afterthought about his sojourn in Manzi, concerning, for example, the local practices of growing very long nails and binding women's feet, although most of the space goes to the story of an "homme commun" whose every need is ministered to by fifty virgins. The other two accounts concern "Cos-som," "one of the granaries and the best provinces in the world" ("une des greigneurs et des meilleurs provinces du monde"), and "Riboth," also a well-stocked realm, where the people fear to shed blood because of their reverence for their idol, have a kind of pope, and follow a peculiar funeral custom: dead fathers are honored by being dismembered and fed to eagles and vultures,

which are thought to be God's angels bearing the dead to Paradise, while their sons cook and eat the severed heads, each then using the leftover skull as a goblet so that the family can toast the deceased's memory.¹

Reworked in some of their details, these three disparate accounts pass otherwise little changed into *The Book*, where they become the last places visited on the brief return journey, since after the third Sir John breaks off the instructive itinerary: "From that country one comes [toward the regions over here] through the Great Chan's land, about which I spoke to you before [many times, and through the countries that I described above], and it is unnecessary to take account [of them] another time [to name them all again]" ("De ceo pais vient homme [deuers les parties par deca] par la terre de Grant Chan, dount ieo vous ay parle deuant [moult de fois parle, et par les pays que iay deuises par dessus], si ne couient mie a tenir autrefoitz compte [si ne les couient mie tous renommer]"). It is hard to know exactly what the *Mandeville*-author might have intended in choosing to bring the itinerary (but not *The Book* as a whole) to such an indeterminate end. Nothing in this, as it were, westward swing recalls anything of the text's earlier move in that direction, which neatly frames the depiction of the Khan's realm with several eastern Christian realms. Nor does the brief return seem to have any other formal function. Commerce, death, and paradisaal luxury are its main concerns, and the second two of these could be understood as thematically appropriate, given their concluding positions, except that there is nothing especially exemplary about the passages in which they occur. Indeed, the changes to Odoric's story of the "homme commun" offer the possibility of both negative and positive interpretations in a mutually self-canceling way, since the pampered fellow, who is now "bien riche," is said to "lead a very noble life, according to the custom over there" ("mene molt noble vie, solonc la custume par de la")—yet is also likened to someone who lives "in his leisure like a pig that is being fattened" ("a soun aise come vn porceal qe homme encrassa").²

The same difficulty arises in the *Mandeville*-author's slightly revised depiction of the outlandish funeral custom in "Riboth," except that balance rather than contradiction is the source of indecision. As in le Long's Odoric, *The Book*'s description is entirely uncritical of what must have struck its audience as a horrific sort of behavior. In the most notable change, in fact, one part of the dead fathers' treatment is explicitly compared to the Latin Christian burial service in a way that makes the two practices almost perfect analogues of each other, yet the comparison neither denigrates the foreign custom nor uses it to reflect critically on Christian behavior: "And then, *just as* the chaplains *over here* sing for the dead, *Come, God's saints, etc.*, so the priests *there* next sing in a loud voice in their language, [Good people,] See what a wise [and

loyal] man he was, that God's angels come to seek him and take him to Paradise'" ("Et puis, *auxi* come les chapelleyns *par de cea* chaudent pur les mortz, *Subuenite, sancti Dei, &c.*, *auxi* cils prestres *la* chaudent adonques a haute voiz en lour langage, '[Bonnes gens,] Regardez come prodhomme [et loiaus] cis estoit, qe li angels Dieu le vieignent quere et le portent en Paradis'"). For Hamelius, "this comparison between the Christian priest . . . and the keeper of a tower of silence . . . reads like a gruesome burlesque of the service." These words may well represent how many readers still feel upon being asked to see the Christian service in such a context, yet the comment seems unjustified by the text itself.³

In general, then, the last two accounts are presented in *The Book's* typically open-minded way, emphasizing above all the world's marvelous diversity, and that is likely the main point of their placement at the itinerary's end. Still, that is not the only point the author wants to make here, for he now begins the task of concluding the work as a whole through what Brunetto Latini would call "la confirmations dou conte," or the closing endorsement of the tale (discourse),⁴ and he does so by addressing the subject of diversity in a way that recalls the sort of comparison made in the passage just quoted and that resumes in briefer form the arguments of two earlier passages: the distinction between idols and simulacra in Chana, and the claim in the theological coda to the Alexander legend that non-Christians have natural knowledge of God.

Natural Unity in Religious Diversity, or Common But Unlevel Ground

Immediately following the close of the text's itinerary, Sir John adds a theological coda to his description of the eastern world that strikes a quite different note from the theological overture at the text's other end. Whereas *The Book* begins with a spirited celebration of the earth's geographical center and Jesus Christ's redeeming Passion there, and thus opens in the almost fiercely devout mood of a pro-crusading tract, it draws to a close with three brief claims (that even at the ends of the earth people believe in God, that they know at least the early books of the Bible, and that their idol worship is different from Christian devotion to saints' images) which give the text's final movement the quietly dispassionate feel of a reasoned discourse on an uncontroversial subject—a feeling disturbed only by the single, uncharacteristically dark note that is heard last.

This unemphatic epilogue opens with one of *The Book's* more common transitions ("and know that"), as Sir John asks the audience to forget about

further travel and turn their attention instead to the common religious ground underlying human diversity. Significantly, the Knight's principal claim here is not put quite so boldly as it was in theological conclusions drawn from the Alexander legend. The basic point of that earlier passage is still endorsed, not retracted, but the claim itself is no longer made in the rhetorically persuasive first-person singular, and the positive assertion is cautiously made by way of an elaborately constructed and syntactically negative period (the variation between "pur quoy ils" and "pour tant qils" leads to a different assertion in each case, but both can be seen as consonant with *The Book's* views as advanced elsewhere):

Et saches qe de toutz ces pais dont iay parle, et de toutes cellis [diuerses] isles et de toutz ces diuerses gentz qe ieo vous ay deuises et des diuers loys et des diuersez creaunces qils ount, il ny ad nulle gent, pur quoy ils [pour tant quil] ayent en eux resoun et entendement, qi nayent *ascuns articles de nostre foy et ascuns bons pointz de nostre creaunce* et qils ne croient en Dieu qy fist le mounde, qils appellent Dieu de nature [que on appelle hiretage, cest a dire Dieu de nature], solonc le prophete qi dit, *Et metuent eum omnes fines terre* [Ps. 67: 7], et aillours, *Omnes gentes seruient ei* [Ps. 72: 11].⁵

And know that in all these countries of which I have spoken, and on all these [diverse] isles and of all these diverse peoples that I have described to you and the diverse laws and the diverse beliefs that they have, there is no people, because [insofar as] they possess reason and understanding, who do not have *some articles of our faith and some good points of our belief* and who do not believe in God who made the world, whom they call God of nature [that is called hiretage, which is to say God of nature], according to the prophet who says, *And all the ends of the earth shall fear him*, and elsewhere, *All nations shall serve him*.

Having thus negatively established the common religious ground of the world's peoples, the text explains the nature of their doctrinal lack first in negative and then in positive terms. The former explanation, significantly, reveals nothing of the exordium's attitude toward the non-Christian world, wherein the Holy Land's unnamed occupiers are described as "miscreantz" who should be ousted by force. At most, the statement echoes only the exordium's criticism of Christian slackness, if now in an implied form, in that it makes an indirect appeal for a mission to Asia. The positive explanation that follows may have been intended to encourage would-be missionaries by making their task seem simpler than it would actually have been, but it oddly contradicts the preceding emphasis on natural faith, since it gives eastern peoples some knowledge of the Bible, thus placing them not in the first of the Pauline tradition's three earthly ages ("ante legem," before the Mosaic

law), but in the second (“sub lege,” under that law): “But they do not know [how to speak] perfectly [of the Faith], for they have no one to explain it [or instruct] them, except as they understand through their natural intelligence, [for of the Father] and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit they do not know how to speak. But they all can speak about the Bible, especially about Genesis, about the sayings of the Prophets, and of the books of Moses [i.e., the Pentateuch]” (“Mes ils ne scieuent mie parfitement [parler], qar ils nount qi lour deuise [ne enseingne], forsqe ensi qils entendent de lour sen naturel, [car du Pere] ne du Fils ne de Seint Espirit ne scieuent ils parler. Mais ils scieuent toutz parler de la Byble, especialment de Genesis, des ditz des Prophetes, et des liures Moyses”).⁶

Such, then, is *The Book’s* final position on non-Christian belief, and it is a generous, if also a culturally limited one, since it cannot entertain the thought that religious diversity may be the expression of an unsettling truth about the metaphysical otherworld(s) that diverse faiths purport to explain, rather than a simple, historically constituted divergence from the underlying unity of (Christian) monotheism. *The Book’s* generous embrace of the non-Christian world, that is, is also an appropriation of it.

At this point, at the end of the final appropriating embrace, *The Book* raises a matter that would have disturbed its more orthodox readers for some time: non-Christian idolatry. As it does so, the text makes a notable rhetorical move. Instead of having Sir John continue to make the theological argument, the text now attributes it to a vague collective “they” that speaks for the world’s eastern peoples, and the practice that “they” defend is said to be analogous to a practice followed by “nous Cristiens”:

Et dient bien qe les creatures qils adorent ne sount mye dieux [Dieu], mes ils les adorent pur la [grant] vertue qi est en ellis, qi ne purroit estre [riens faire] saunz grace de Dieu. Et des simulacres et des ydols [quil ont] ils dient qe nul gent ne sount qi nayent simulacres; et ceo dient pur ceo qe nous Cristiens auons ymages de nostre Dame et des autres seintz qe nous adoroms.

And they say that the creatures that they worship are not gods [God], but they worship them for the [great] power that is in them, which could not exist [could do nothing] without God’s grace. And of simulacra and of idols [that they have] they say that there is no people who have no simulcra; and *this they say because we Christians have images of our Lady and of other saints that we worship.*

For the moment, the text seems to be returning to its earlier mode of using eastern practices as a critical mirror of Christian habits, and one is tempted to agree with Hamelius’s comment that this passage represents “a

covert hit at the worship of images,”⁷ especially since such a critique could easily be consonant with the text’s emphasis on simple devotion and simple faith. As so often in *The Book*, however, things unfold in an unexpected manner. Emerging now to speak for Christendom as a whole, Sir John falls back on the standard medieval justification of image worship as necessary for teaching the laity what they otherwise could not learn, while his communal “we,” significantly, makes a sharp distinction between Christian images and non-Christian idols, presenting the latter as worshiped in and of themselves (the bracketed words from the Continental Version could be authorial, although in my view they read more like a marginal comment that has migrated into the text):

Mes ils ne scieuent mye quoy nous adorons noun pas les ymages de bois ne de pierre, mes les sentz en qy nouns elles sont faitz; qar, [tout] auxi come la lettre aprent et enseigne les clerkes, quoy et coment ils deuoient croire, auxi les ymages et les peintures apprendrent les laie gentz a penser et a orer les seintz en quoy nons ils sont faitz. [Car pensee domme et de femme est souuent corrupue par pluseurs choses mondaines, pour quoy ilz oublieroient moult souuent Dieu, nostre Dame et les sains a deprier, se les figures faites ou nom deuls ne les en faisoient souuenir.]

But they do not know that we worship not the images of wood or of stone, but the saints in whose names they are made; for [just] as the letter teaches and instructs the clerks what and how they are to believe, so the images and the paintings teach the lay people to think about and pray to the saints in whose name they are made. [For men’s and women’s thought is often corrupted by many worldly things, whereby they very often forget to pray to God, our Lady, and the saints, and the figures made in their name do not make them remember.]

To reinforce this crucial distinction, the *Mandeville*-author has Sir John rely on a strategy used earlier in criticizing both non-Christian and Christian belief in auguries: he accepts the reality of this objectionable practice, rather than attempting to dismiss it as pagan fantasy. In this case, he allows that pagan idols are more than ineffectual bits of wood and stone, and so presents their worship less as ignorant foolishness on the part of the worshippers than as their deception by malevolent spirits. Instead of the expected reaffirmation of human spiritual unity, then, or of the potential “Christianness” of the eastern world, *The Book*’s final reflection on religious diversity offers an implicit image of the spirit world’s struggle for human souls and an explicit statement that many non-Christians live in religious error:

Ils dient auxi qe ly angels Dieu parlent a eux en celles ydoles et qils font des grantz miracles [pour euls]. Et ils dient voir qil y a vn aungel dedeinz; mes il y a deux maneres

dangels, bons et mals, si qe [si comme] ly Gregois dient Cacho et Calo. Et Cacho est malucis, et Calo est bons. *Mes ceo nest mie ly bons, mes ly malueis, qest as ydols pur eux deceiure et pur eux maintenir en lour erreur.*

They say also that God's angels speak to them in those idols and that they perform great miracles [for them]. And *they say truly that there is an angel within*; but there are two kinds of angels, good and bad, such that [such as] the Greeks say Cacho [kakos] and Calo [kalos]. And Cacho is bad, and Calo is good. *But it is not the good, but the bad one that is in the idols in order to deceive them and maintain them in their error.*

"In their error": *The Book* has not come full circle by any means, but there can be no doubt that this theological epilogue remains closer to the exordium's religious chauvinism than one might have anticipated. After so much implicit and explicit criticism of Latin Christian laxness in relation to the non-Christian world, the *Mandeville*-author takes care to make Sir John's final word on comparative religious matters affirm both the doctrine and the customs of his own culture by casting a cold eye on those of other cultures—as if he were attempting to fulfill the second of Brunetto Latini's three requirements for a proper conclusion: "desdaing," or scorn.⁸

The Finite Plentitude of Marvelous Diversity

"Error" is not to be *The Book's* last word on the world, however. "Diversity" is. For immediately following the quoted passage, Sir John addresses his audience on the matter of the eastern world's plentitude and of his own account's incompleteness. Not only are there "many other diverse countries and many other marvels over there that [he has] not seen at all, and so cannot properly speak about" ("plusours autres diuers pais et moutz dautres meruailles par de la, qe ieo nay mie tout veu, si nen saueroye proprement parler"); there are also in the countries that he did visit many diversities that he has not mentioned, because it would take too long to describe them all. Granted that Sir John himself never traveled except in his creator's imagination, this claim is as true as it is conventional, especially since it issues in a baldly stated request for the audience to accept as sufficient what he has actually given them—a mere two hundred pages' worth of edifying and diverting information. "And therefore what I have described for you of some countries ought to do you for now" ("Et pur ceo qe ieo vo'is ay deusez dascuns pais, vous doit suffire quant a present").⁹

Rather less conventional than this bold form of the modesty topos, though, is the succeeding claim (which reveals the usually unnoticed origins

of the word “travel”): “For if I were to describe everything that exists over there, another who would take the pains and labour his body to go into those regions and to seek the country [far countries] would be hindered by my words from recounting any foreign curiosities, for he would be able to say nothing new that listeners could take pleasure in” (“Qar, si ieo deuisoie tout quantqes y est par de la, vn autre qi se peneroit et trauailleroit le corps pur aler en celles marches et pur sercher la pais [les lointains pays], serroit empeschez par mes ditz a recompter nuls choses estranges, qar il ne purroit rien dire de nouelle, en quoy ly oyantz y puissent prendre solaces”).¹⁰ The notable thing about this comment, apart from what it tells us about the late-medieval appetite for “choses estranges,” is the assumption that it makes about the world. The world is copious, and as such is a testament to God’s generosity; and yet its full copiousness can potentially be seen by even a single traveler and subsequently embraced within the covers of a single book. Half-hidden in *The Book’s* conventional mode of closure, then, is an assumption which earlier gave rise to the claim that the earth can be circumnavigated, and which historically gave rise to the vast body of documents that issued from the longer-lived and unimaginably more successful and more tragic phase of Christian European expansion after Columbus.

I John Mandeville Abovesaid

After announcing that he “will say no more . . . so that someone [else] who would go into those parts might find enough to say” (“si men taceray a tant . . . a la fin qe cis qi vourra aler en celles parties y troeue assez a dire”), Sir John finally brings his account to a close by naming himself in the same “quasi-juridical” formula used in the exordium. In this case, however, its formal derivation from the will is all the more apparent, since the Knight now presents himself as an old man, a gesture that also allows him to evoke the audience’s pity, the third of Brunetto Latini’s requirements for proper closure. Whereas in the exordium, the passage beginning “ieo Johan Maundeulle, chiualer” testifies to the qualifications of the person who is to guide the audience on the tour of the Holy Land and parts farther east, the echoing passage here supplements that testimony with information about the circumstances of *The Book’s* composition in the author’s declining years:

Et ieo, Iohan [de] Maundeulle dessudit, qi men party de nos [nostre] pais et passay le mer lan de grace mil ccc.xxii^{de}, qi moint terre et moint passage et moint pays ay puis cerchez, et qy ay este en moint bone compaignie et en [veu] molt beal fait, come bien

qe ieo ne feisse vncqes ne beal fait ne beal emprise [ne autres biens, dont on doie faire compte ne riens tenir], et qi meinentant suy venuz a repos maugre mien, pur goutes artetikes, qi moy destreignont, en preignan solacz en mon cheitif repos, en recordant le temps passe, ay cestes choses compilez et mises en escript, si come il me poet souuenir, lan de grace mil ccc.lvi^{me} a xxxiiii^{te} an qe ieo men party de noz [nostre] pais.¹¹

And I, John [of] Mandeville abovesaid—who departed our countries [country] and crossed the sea in the year of grace 1322, who then sought many lands and many voyages and many countries, and who was in much good company and in [saw] many fine deeds, although I never did any fine deed or fine undertaking [or other good things that one should take account of or value], and who now have come to rest despite myself, on account of arthritic goutts that hinder me—taking pleasure in my wretched rest in recording the past time, have compiled these things and put them in writing, such as I could remember, in the year of grace 1356, in the thirty-fourth year after I departed our countries [country].

There are enough details in this passage to give it the necessary ring of truth. The dates are precise—but not too precise—and the text refers generally to Sir John’s fellow travelers and overseas undertakings, recalling the accounts of the Khan’s court and the infernal valley, among others, in what amounts to a circular mode of authentication. Nor is the fact that Sir John fails to name his colleagues unusual; rather, it is typical of a genre in which the focus is on the world, not one’s experience of it. In addition, and this is the most important element here, there is also the compelling “self-portrait” of the gouty old traveler anticipating the pleasure that his audience will take—but have by now already taken—in his recollections of the eastern world. Even today there are probably readers who put *The Book* down wanting to believe in the portrait’s truth.¹²

What is missing from this final testimony, however, is any hard information about how the Knight returned or where he chose to take his “wretched rest”: did he, like many knights once errant, retreat to a monastery, where he could have found material for reading and writing and would have had access to the Bible that supplies the Latin quotations flavoring his account and proving his claims? To scholars seeking the real author, this passage must seem frustratingly vague. Yet in context, it is as precise as it needs to be, given not only its rhetorical function but also its ideological purpose of establishing—in concert with the preceding theological discussion and the concluding prayer—a temporarily classless and nationless Christian community in the face of the serious divisions running through the Latin Christendom of the late 1350s.

The audience learns all it needs to know in the statement that he is back in “noz [nostre] pays,” a phrase which is less likely to refer to England than to Christendom, the most appropriate final resting place for an “author” whose

opening and closing gestures collapse the distinction between author and audience with the words “nous Cristiens.” Indeed, there is compelling evidence for this view in the conventional close that follows the “quasi-juridical” testament. There, in Sir John’s final praise and prayer, is the request that God fill with grace and save “all the *Christian* readers and hearers” (“toutz les lisantz et oyantz *Cristiens*”) of his book—a significant phrase overlooked by critics and commentators (largely because it is absent from the Cotton and Egerton Versions used as proxies for the authorial text).

The best comment on this passage, and in certain respects on *The Book* as a whole, is Warner’s self-conscious turn against himself in the introduction to his great Victorian edition of the Egerton and Insular Versions: “After the disingenuous manner in which, as I have shown, the work was compiled, the few pious and touching words with which it finally concludes sound incongruous, not to say revolting. But it would be a hasty assumption that the writer merely added conscious hypocrisy to his other sins. . . . In the Middle Ages especially, the queerest inconsistencies everywhere confront us, and as likely as not his words were the outcome of genuine religious feeling. . . .” It might well be truer to say that the queerest inconsistencies of medieval works appear so strikingly to us because we have replaced them with our own unseen contradictions, but Warner’s resistance to the easy conclusion drawn by many of his Victorian contemporaries (as well as later writers) remains a notable testament to *The Book*’s power to unsettle certainties.¹³

Loose Ends

No less than the *Mandeville*-author’s own misleading conclusion, the endings fashioned by *The Book*’s medieval intermediaries confront modern readers with the queerest inconsistencies. In, for example, the Bodley Version’s Musaeo manuscript, whose text is anything but a faithful translation, Sir John’s closing prayer includes a request for the integral transmission of his work: “I prei entierly to alle tho that this bok redyn or writyn that thei redyn no more ne writyn than I haue wretyn, for that I haue wretyn is trewe.”¹⁴ This admonition notwithstanding, no isotope faithfully transmits the entire section defined by the last four of the five closing steps in the Continental and Insular Versions (the theological coda, the mention of still undescribed diversities, the personal peroration, and the final prayer), and, as we shall see in later sections, at least five versions interpolate claims as disingenuous as those made by the fabricating *Mandeville*-author himself. The Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions, for example, along with one manuscript of an insular

Latin translation, include a passage in which Sir John has his book approved by the pope, while the Liège and Vulgate Latin redactions add an account explaining how *The Book* came to be composed in Liège. Among the other isotopes, the Metrical Version breaks off incomplete, while the Bodley and Velser redactions contain much compressed (and unrelated) renderings of the closing section. The von Diemerungen Version also compresses the authorial ending, doing away with everything except the theological coda, but then greatly expands that coda with a revised rendering of *The Book's* earlier account of Saracen beliefs and religious practices.

This German redaction, to begin with the isotope whose conclusion departs the farthest from that of the Continental and Insular Versions, initially gives the impression that it will end in the same way as the two French versions. As soon as the text mentions Christian as well as pagan diversity, however, it moves on to its lengthy and largely negative account of the Saracens. More than any other version, von Diemerungen's redaction brings the text back to the concerns of its earlier sections—except that those concerns have been absent from the von Diemerungen Version until this point:

In dem fromden landen ist manigerley [glauben] und sytten, wan dye cristen in den landen hant nyt glich alle cristen glaüben, noch auch dye heyden gelych heydessen glauben. Dye heyden glaubent alle an got, der ye und ewanchlichen gewesen ist und jmer syn soil. Me dye in Egipten und dye jn des soldans gewalt und landes und auch in andern landen viel haltent yren glauben von Machemet.¹⁵

In foreign countries there are many [beliefs] and customs, because the Christians in the countries do not all have the same Christian belief, nor do the pagans have the same paganish belief either. The pagans all believe in God, who ever was and always will be. But many of those in Egypt and of those in the Sultan's dominion and lands and also in other countries take their belief from Machemet.

Having passed without warning from Cathay to Egypt, von Diemerungen's redaction returns once again to Cathay at the end of its long account of those who "take their belief from Machemet." When it does return, it offers its audience a short summary of pagan beliefs based not on the *Mandeville*-author's theological coda, but on details taken from the account of Chana, where the local people worship various objects. Unlike the two French versions, though, this redaction does not try to justify the practices; it merely mentions them. In addition, the summary picks up on Sir John's reference to Hercules—which the Knight uses to justify the worship of simulacra as a form of ancestor worship—and offers a short survey of the ancient gods, such that both ends of the East are implicitly connected at the text's close, although von Diemerungen makes nothing of the link.

The explanation for the absence here of explicit connections is probably to be found in the final part of the German redaction's much expanded theological coda, where the text turns its attention to the subject mentioned at the start: Christian diversity. In the Continental and Insular Versions, as we have seen, sectarian Christian beliefs and practices are examined briefly and dispassionately. They are treated even more briefly in von Diemeringen's Version, and with no interest in the forms that sectarian differences take. Instead, the curiosity expressed in the two French versions gives way to a latent regret, as the text draws attention to the fact of diversity itself, and then attempts to salvage some consolation from the limited common ground shared by Christians before moving into the brief prayer with which the redaction as a whole concludes:

Auch synt dye cristen verandert an dem glauben, wan sye gloubent nyt alle glych an dye sacrament nach an dye driegvaltikeit, nach an dye messe, nach an daz fegefure, nach an dye helle, nach an dye e. . . wye wol sye daz meyste deyl glauben an Ihesum und an syn goitheit, und das syn glauben, der beste ist. Und bittet alle zu yme zu kommenne. Und dasselbe byt ich dich auch o Cristus. . .¹⁶

The Christians too are different in the belief, because they do not all equally believe in the sacraments, nor in the Trinity, nor in the mass, nor in Purgatory, nor in Hell, nor in eternity. . . although the majority believe in Jesus and in his divinity, and that his belief is the best. And he prays to all to come to him. And I pray to you too for the same thing oh Christ. . .

Unlike the other isotopes, then, the von Diemeringen Version ends with a supplementary survey of the religious observations omitted from the text where they would have occurred if the redactor had translated the Liège Version as it unfolds. Furthermore, the independent gathering that he made of this material differs radically from the *Mandeville*-author's own work in that it offers no reflections on its important subject. Being placed last, the gathering necessarily has a certain prominence, but it makes no use of that prominence to draw any large conclusions, and it thus leaves *The Book's* projected audience with a more negative sense of the world's spiritual diversity than do the Continental and Insular Versions.

At the same time, too, von Diemeringen's ending uniquely leaves the audience without the personal peroration, just as its independent exordium greeted them without the personal introduction. Evidently, he did not think that *The Book* needed such an authenticating frame, or such a formal mode of closure, even though in working from the Liège and the Vulgate Latin Versions he had access to the detailed and persuasive forms of Sir John's testament interpolated into those two texts. As a result, and despite the "I" that emerges

with the final prayer, this German redaction ultimately becomes what even the Continental and Insular Versions often seem to be: a work whose author is recent tradition rather than an ostensibly historical person.

Such is not the case with the Bodley Version, whose authorizing close—called the “Libri conclusiones” in the Rawlinson manuscript—clearly echoes its compressed exordium, which begins, it will be recalled, with the “quasi-juridical” formula “I John Mandeville, knight.” What is notable about this version is that, despite having made virtually no use of the *Mandeville*-author’s arguments for the unity underlying the world’s religious diversity, it contains a compressed version of the Insular Version’s four-part close in which the theological coda has a prominent place. The closing passage thus affirms a position that the text as a whole neither anticipates nor offers explicit evidence for. In addition, and quite unexpectedly, the theological coda ends with a less critical presentation of pagan idolatry. While it is true that this version still makes the idols speak for the bad (now the devil’s) angels, it does not make the crucial distinction between Christian image worship and pagan idolatry, nor does it mention that the idols are used to deceive people and “maintain them in their error.” As a result, the coda’s forceful closing sentence cannot quite undo the uncritical presentation that precedes it:

And they seye that the criaturis that they honure are none goddis, but they honoure hem for the gret virtues and the sothfastnesse that is foundyn in hem thour the yifte of God. And thei sei ther is non nacyoun that thei ne han ymagis and honoure hem, and thei [seye] forthi that Cristen men honoure the crucifix and othere ymages of halwyn [in her chirchis]. They seyn that angellis spekyn to hem thour here ymages and ydolatrie and werkyth manye wondris. And there thei seyn soth, for the deuillis angellis spekyn to hem [in her mawmettis].¹⁷

The theological coda is also—and more justifiably—a prominent part of the closing section in Velser’s Version, where its force is slightly enhanced by its following the displaced Alexander legend, whose bolder theological conclusion, as we saw in the previous chapter, it effectively replaces. Judging from the changes that he makes to the conclusion as a whole, though, Velser seems to have been more interested in the rest of *The Book*’s closing sections than in its final theological argument. In part, this other interest looks like a certain anxiety about *The Book*’s believability—not a new concern in his translation—in that the changes mainly affect Sir John’s portrait in a positive way. In mentioning, for example, the marvels not included in the book, the translator does not make the English Knight suggest that he could have described them all; instead, he has Sir John commend their description to “other pious honest people” (“das ander wil ich enphelhen andren frumen byderben lúten”). In

addition, and more significantly, he has the Knight insist on the instructional rather than the diverting nature of his recollections, explicitly recalling the exordium's principal claims, while adding a final unqualified truth claim: "And what I have told you is true" ("Und was ich uch geseyt hon das ist wär").¹⁸

By way of reinforcing this assertion, Velser's text turns to the "quasi-juridical" testament ("Ich, Hans von Mandavilla, ritter"). The Knight's "self"-portrait remains essentially unchanged, but not the rest of this final passage, which Velser reinterprets and paraphrases to suit his own rhetorical aims. What he does not reinterpret, however—uniquely among *The Book's* medieval intermediaries—is the closing prayer's address to a specifically Christian audience; in fact, he heightens the prominence of that address by curtailing the prayer and defining the audience still more precisely: "Wherefore I pray to *all faithful Christians* that they will pray to God for me with a pater noster . . ." ("Da von bit ich *all trúw cristen* das sie got wollend fúr mich bitten mit ainem pater noster . . .").

Between this reworked prayer and Sir John's summary of his travels, Velser makes several notable changes to his source, as well as one intervention that is glaringly ironic to all who know that the Knight's "self"-portrait is a fiction (for even if the *Mandeville*-author were a gouty old knight returned from a pilgrimage and compiling his book, the compilation itself is based on others' books, not memory). In particular, Velser has Sir John strongly emphasize his physically straitened circumstances, diverting attention from the book to the man so as to capture the audience's goodwill as fully as possible: "Then I came home and had to rest upon my thoughts. For an illness came upon me that bereft me of all my pleasure, because I would gladly have seen many things" ("Do kam ich haim und müst rúwen úber min gedenck. Wann mich kam ain seichtag an, der mir all min frod benam, wann ich noch menig ding gern gesehen hett"). At the same time, though, Velser interferes with this persuasive rhetorical gesture because he does not know how to translate "goutes artetikes" and is too honest to invent another illness. One could hardly imagine a more ironic conclusion to *The Book* than this loose end left scrupulously untied by the German translator: "The illness is called *podagra* [gout] in Latin. (I do not know what it is called in German; whether one calls it *dropsy*, I do not know; if anyone happens to know it, he should set it down in the book)" ("Der siechtage haisset inlatin podagra. [Ich waiß nit wie er in tútsche haisset; ob man es haisset den tropffen, das waiß ich nit, wann wer es wisse, der setze es in das búch.]").

Papal Approbation, or the Roman Route Home

Unlike Velser, several of *The Book's* medieval intermediaries had no scruples about inventing information with which to supplement Sir John's personal peroration. In fact, as noted already, the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions, along with one insular Latin manuscript, contain an interpolated anecdote about Sir John's having had his book approved by the pope in Rome, which in its three variant forms makes claims that contradict the peroration's general account of Sir John's return and *The Book's* genesis.¹⁹ It is possible, as one scholar has suggested, that the papal interpolation originated in a copy of the Insular Version, even though no such copy has survived, and it is certain from what is known of the textual history of the versions in question that the Egerton and Latin forms of the interpolation must be later than the Cotton and Defective forms; what is uncertain, however, is whether the Cotton or the Defective Version contains the prior form of the interpolation as it has survived.²⁰ Whatever the truth of the matter, the passage is more neatly dovetailed with its context in the Cotton Version than in the other two English redactions (which in fact contain exactly the same form of the interpolation), and it is with the Cotton text that I begin here, assuming for the sake of argument that its interpolation also represents the prior form.

Of all the *The Book's* isotopes, the Cotton Version departs least from its immediate source (the Insular Version) on any given page, and the situation is no different in the text's closing steps, which are presented exactly as the translator found them, his changes being confined to matters of diction, except where the papal interpolation occurs. Among the lexical changes made in these pages, one may give us a clue to the interpolation's historical and rhetorical functions (and it may also be evidence of the Cotton form's priority). In describing the religious leader of "Byboth" (Odoric's "Riboth") on the brief return journey, the text of the Insular Version refers to him as "the pope of their law" ("le pape de lour loy"), and explains that everyone is obedient to him "as those of holy church here are to the Pope" ("si qe fount icy les gentz de seint esglise al Pape"). The Cotton translator, uniquely among *The Book's* English intermediaries, renders the latter phrase with the words "as men don here to the Pope of Rome."²¹

Fourteenth-century papal history is too complicated a matter to summarize here, but several well-known facts are relevant: the papal curia was officially headquartered in Avignon between 1309 and 1378, although Urban V spent three years (1367–70) in Rome in a failed attempt to reestablish the papacy there; and when the Great Schism (1378–1417) divided the European powers into pro-Roman and pro-Avignonese camps, England declared for

Rome, and France for Avignon. Exactly when the Cotton translation was made is uncertain (about 1400 is the received date), but it seems clear that the rendering of “al Pape” as “to the Pope of Rome” is a deliberately partisan gesture in its historical context (which could have been any time between 1378 and 1417, if not also before, as a statement of what ought to be, or after, as a reminder of the restoration). By the same token, the interpolated account of Sir John’s visit to Rome on his return journey in order to have the pope legitimate his “tretys” looks like a conscious and not altogether simple-minded attempt to enlist the English Knight and his book on behalf of the pro-Roman camp by showing him and the pope endorsing each other’s authority—a gesture that authenticates the book in the process. What seems particularly favorable to the partisan theory is not only the fact that the interpolation has been made at the expense of the closing section’s coherence, and so betrays a desire to make the point at any price, but also the way in which the passage reveals Sir John recognizing the pope as his *spiritual* head, something that neither the Defective/Egerton nor the Latin form of it does.²²

Whatever the validity of this argument, the fact remains that readers of the Cotton Version encounter the papal interpolation after having read the words “Pope of Rome” a few pages before. In addition, they come upon it in a context where its interpolated character is not apparent, since the passage is neatly set between Sir John’s explanation of why he ends his account without having described everything that exists “par de la” and his “quasi-juridical” testimonial, using the *Mandeville*-author’s typical transition: “and zee schull vndirstonde.” Significantly, the Knight’s first gesture here is to resume the subject of the preceding theological discussion in a personal and practical way, raising a question that might have occurred to some readers: whether his “creaunce” and “bone foy” were affected by his extensive and apparently sympathetic contact with the non-Christian world. The question has come up at least twice before: once directly, when Sir John admits to having rejected the Sultan’s offer of a prince’s daughter and an inheritance for the sake of his faith; and once by implication, when at the end of the account of Saracens, he mentions that “there have often been some Christians who become Saracens, either out of simplicity, or out of poverty, or out of wickedness” (“il y auient souent qascun Cristien deuient Sarazins, ou pur simpletee, ou pur pouerte, ou pur malueistee”). On the present occasion, though, the Cotton translator (or the original interpolator, as the case may be) has Sir John acknowledge, in a carefully guarded way, his necessarily comprised spiritual state at the end of his travels, the indirection being a rhetorically persuasive gesture in the context: “And zee schull vndirstonde zif it lyke zou pat at myn hom comynge I cam to Rome + schewed my lif to oure holy fadir the Pope + was assoylled

of alle þat lay in my conscience of many a dyuerse [greuous] poynt, as men mosten nedes þat ben in company dwellyng among so many a dyuerse folk of dyuerse secte + of beleewe as I haue ben.”²³

Under the circumstances, of course, Sir John does more than show the pope his life; he also shows his confessor his work. In a move designed to reinforce the authority of both the Roman See and *The Book*, the interpolator has the Knight receive absolution before his book receives approbation. In addition, he has Sir John make the conventional admission that his “tretys”—as he calls it, emphasizing its serious nature—contains reliable hearsay information as well as his own eyewitness accounts, each subject to correction by the highest authority in Christendom (and thus in the world; note too that *The Book*’s subjects are defined as information, marvels, and customs): “And amonges all I schewed hym this tretys þat I had made after informacioun of men þat knewen of thinges þat I had not seen myself, And also of merueyles and customes þat I hadde seen myself as fer as god wolde zeue me grace, And besoughte his holy fadirhode, þat my boke myghte ben examyned and corrected be avys of his wyse + discreet conseil.”

The remainder of this rhetorically calculated passage develops still further the complicated and self-confirming dialectic of experience and authority initiated by Sir John’s humble request. He offers his eyewitness testimony to the existence of a written authority that testifies to the existence of what he as an eyewitness has written about in his book—and this looping Roman dance is itself then authenticated by an appeal to a partly written authority that readers might have been able to see for themselves: the *Mappamundi*, a pictorial and textual authority so well known that Sir John can point to it with the simple definite article. This, clearly, is a more sophisticated form of the gesture that Middle English romances often make when they close by noting that their story is chronicled in Rome.²⁴ Finally, by way of conclusion, the interpolator has Sir John address the sceptical much as he does in the portrait of the Khan’s court, boldly affirming the veracity of his account no matter what such people think:

And oure holy fader *of his special grace* remytted my boke to ben examyned + preued be the Avys of his seyde conseil, Be the whiche my boke was preued for trewe jn so moche þat þei schewed me a boke þat my boke was examyned by, þat comprehended full moche more be an hundred part, be the whiche the Mappa Mundi was made after. And so my boke, all be it þat many men ne list not to zeue credence to no þing but to þat þat þei seen with hire eye, ne be the Auctour ne the persone neuer so trewe, is affermed + preued be oure holy fader *in maner + forme* as I haue seyde.

From these words, the Cotton text turns to Sir John’s “quasi-judicial” account of his book’s composition, and it is a testament to the interpolation’s

rhetorical persuasiveness—and the syntactic complexity of the sentence beginning “I Iohn Maundevyll”—that one hardly notices the fundamental contradiction which emerges regarding the book’s origins.

In the Defective and Egerton form of the interpolation, this contradiction reveals itself much more obviously, since the papal interpolation there immediately follows Sir John’s “quasi-judicial” testimony. Having learned that the English Knight “now [has] comen to rest . . . [and] compiled þis buke,” the audience is told within two or three clauses that he “made [his] way in [his] commyng hamward vnto Rome to schew [his] buke till oure haly fader þe Pape”—a prominent inconsistency that has not prevented at least two recent readers from taking the passage to be authorial. More interesting than the clumsiness with which the interpolation is handled in these two English Versions is the different form that it takes. As the above quotation already suggests, Sir John here goes to Rome for the sake of his book alone, not for his soul. The *initial* transition to the passage itself, moreover, is justified by the claim that *concludes* it in its Cotton form: “And for als mykill as many men trowez noȝt bot þat þat þai see with þaire eghen, or þat þai may consayue with þaire awen kyndely wittes, þerfore I made my way in my commyng hamward vnto Rome to schew my buke till oure haly fader þe Pape.”²⁵

If in the Cotton interpolation, it is the pope’s spiritual authority that allows him to confirm the traveler’s eyewitness accounts, in the Defective/Egerton form, it is his court’s role as the world’s meeting place. Indeed, it is not just the pope and his council who are asked to examine the book, but the various people at his court (the original interpolator may have had in mind the occasional thirteenth-century visits to Rome by envoys from the various ilkhans). Such extra-papal confirmation must have been mainly supplementary, however, since the all-encompassing book from which the *Mappamundi* was made is again brought forward to authenticate the authentication, and this time the book is said to be written in Latin—a claim that would have echoed Sir John’s assertion in the exordium that he should have set his account down in Latin to be more concise, if the Defective and Egerton Versions had not omitted that passage. In any case, the point is the same. *The Book*’s claim to truth is reinforced by a language in which it is *not* written (note too that *The Book*’s subject matter in this rendering has been reduced from information, marvels, and customs to marvels, as if only they needed the extra authority):

And I tald him þe meruailes whilk I had sene in diuerse cuntreez, so þat he with his wyse counsaile wald *examyne it with diuerse folke þat er in Rome, for þare er euermare dwelland men of all naciouns of þe werld.* And a lytill [after], when he and his wyse counsaile had examynde it all thurgh, he said to me for certayne þat all was soth þat was þerin. For [he] said þat he had *a buke of Latyn* þat con[teyned] all þat and mykill mare,

after whilk buke [the *Mappa*] *Mundi* es made; and þat buke he schewed m[e. And] perfore oure haly fader þe Pape has ratified [and] conformed my buke in all poyntes.

Not only that, but according to a scribal interpolation in one fifteenth-century copy of the Defective Version, the pope has bestowed significant spiritual powers on the ratified book itself: "And oure holy fader hath graunted to al tho that redith or wrytith or heryth this boke with good devocion, an C dayes to pardon and goddis blessynge on hye."²⁶

The third form of this interpolation, which appears to have been made from the Defective/Egerton rendering, has no need to specify a Latin book as the authenticating document, since it occurs in a Latin text: Durham University MS. Cosin V. iii. 7 (fol. 83v), a late fifteenth-century copy (one of some seven) of the Royal Version, which is one of four Latin translations made independently from the Insular Version. Printed only in Seymour's commentary to his edition of the Bodley Version, this is the least known yet most elaborate of the three extant interpolations. Apparently placed in the same location as the Defective/Egerton form, after the passage beginning "ego, Iohannes de Maundeuille," the Cosin interpolation opens with a more detailed and overtly religious version of the transitional statement quoted above. The imagined sceptics of this version, for example, need to see things "with their bodily eyes" ("corporalibus oculis"), while Sir John goes to Rome on a pilgrimage ("peregrinacionis gracia") to show his book "to the supreme pontiff" ("summo pontifici"), as well as for the purpose of confirming from the diverse people there "whether they recognised the experiences and the trifles that had been set down in the said booklet" ("ab hiis comprobandi causa an experta vel friuola agnoscerent ea que in dicto libello fuerant exarata").²⁷

More than the other two, the Cosin interpolation gives the impression of having been written by someone who had actually visited the papal court. The account of Sir John's encounter with the pope, moreover, clearly echoes the Knight's earlier encounter with the Sultan, right down to the private colloquy that serves to confirm what the Cotton form calls the "special grace" shown to the visitor. As in that earlier passage, the initial exchange here is made the more dramatic by being given in direct discourse:

Quem [libellum] cum benigne acciperat et diligenter cum bona deliberacione examinauerat, die quadam per armigerum suum causa mutue collocucionis ad cameram suam in palacio Sancti Petri fecit me venire. Quod cum venissem et prostratus super terram humiliter adorassem, in presencia duorum cardinalium hiis verbis michi affatus est, "Quod est tibi nomen?" Ad quem ego, "Iohannes." Ac ille inquit, "Librum tuum perspexi atque per librum alium maiorum mirorum examinaui."

He received it in a friendly manner, and carefully and deliberately examined it. One day he had his attendants bring me to his chamber in the palace of St. Peter for the sake of a private conversation. And when I had come and, lying flat on the ground, had humbly honored him, he addressed these words to me in the presence of two cardinals, "What is your name?" I said to him, "John." And he said, "I have inspected your book and examined it against another book of greater wonders."

This corroborating book, unlike the one cited in the Cotton and Defective/Egerton interpolations, now has a name, and it happens to be the work of an Englishman: Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, which was very popular in the fourteenth century. In addition to the named book, there is also a counterpart to the *Mappamundi*: a wonderful spherical device that could perhaps be an armillary sphere, but that appears from the description to resemble a globe. Like the world map, the Latin text's world sphere is said to have been made from the papal book, and this raises an intriguing possibility, given the late date of the manuscript ("after 1485," according to Seymour). The first extant European globe, made at Nuremburg in 1492, cites John Mandeville several times as an authority, and it would be an even greater irony than Velser's scrupulous honesty in the epilogue, if the corroborating sphere named in the Cosin text were the Nuremburg globe or another like it that cited the English Knight.²⁸ In any case, the Latin text goes the others one better here, since it has Sir John discover the contents of his book on the pope's world sphere:

Tunc asportari fecit quemdam librum magni voluminis quem appellauit *Polichronica*, et fecit in eo legi multa maiora et mirabiliora ac etiam plura quam in libro meo continebantur. Et fecit cardinalem michi demonstrare quoddam instrumentum rotundum curiose et modo mirifico compositum, in eo continens per sculpciones vel depicturas pene omnia regna et genera nacionum, mirificum quod appellauit *Speram Mundi*. Et dixit quod instrumentum fuerat compositum secundum disposicionem et formam predicti voluminis michi premonstrati. Et ibi inueni omnia genera tam virorum quam bestiarum contentorum in libello meo prenotato, vafaciensque domino Pape optinens ab eo suam benedicionem, asserenti et confirmanti ea in libro meo descripta esse vera.

Then he had a certain very voluminous book brought in that he called *Polichronica*, and he had them read in it many great and wonderful things and even more than were contained in my book. And he had a cardinal show me a certain spherical instrument, painstakingly and finely made, containing in itself in the form of figures or pictures virtually all realms and races of people—a wonderful device that he called the *Sphere of the World*. And he said that the instrument was made according to the order and arrangement of the foresaid volume previously shown to me. And there I found all the sorts of men and animals included in my just-noted book, and bidding farewell to my

lord the Pope I obtained from him his blessing, with him declaring and confirming those things described in my book to be true.

Laid Up in Liège

In the references on the Nuremburg globe, “Johan de Mandavilla” is distinguished by two titles: “knight” and “physician.” It is not clear how he acquired the latter, but it may have resulted from a cursory reading of two interpolations in the Vulgate Latin Version in which the Knight is associated with a physician called Jean à la Barbe. The two interpolations are unique to this widely circulated redaction, but the story that underlies them has its origins in the Liège or Interpolated Continental Version. What the Latin redactor did, like the person responsible for the papal interpolation in the Cosin manuscript, was to give the authenticating story a fuller and more persuasive form. If Velser did not know what Sir John suffered from and was too honest to invent an illness, the maker of the Latin Version’s Liège source saw the reference to arthritic gout as a chance to tell a story that would be confirmed by an earlier part of the text. The story itself is very short, a few sentences that seamlessly extend Sir John’s final testimony, but it is also highly memorable, particularly in the precision of its circumstantial detail:

Et je Jehans de Mandeville chevaliers . . . ay che traytié complet et mis en escript . . . lan de grace dessus dit mil trois chents et lvij al xxxv^e an que je men partis de mon pays dedens la noble cyté de Lyege en la basse sabloniere [saveniere] en lostel Hannekin dit le volt, a la requeste et proriere de honnorable [homme venerable] et discreit maistre Jehan de Bourgoigne dis a le barbe phizitian qui en ma maladie moy vizitoit, et en vizitant moy recognut et raviza sy com chil qui mavoyt veu en la court le souldan de Egypte avœc le quel il demoroyt quant je fuy la.²⁹

And I John Mandeville, knight . . . have completed this treatise and put it in writing . . . in the year of grace abovesaid 1357 in the thirty-fifth year since I departed my country in the noble city of Liège in the Basse-Sauvenière at the inn of Hannekin called Le Volt, at the request and bidding of the honorable [distinguished man] and wise master Jean de Bourgoigne called à la Barbe, physician, who visited me in my illness, and in visiting recognized me and recalled how he had seen me at the court of the Sultan of Egypt with whom he stayed when I was there.

As this passage reveals, the Liège redactor took advantage of the vagueness about *The Book*’s composition in the Continental Version’s epilogue, not only to give *The Book* itself a more persuasive conclusion, but also to give

his *patria* a certain prestige, naming a local street, an inn, and even the inn-keeper. Such details inevitably challenge sceptical readers to confirm their authenticity, and several nineteenth-century scholars accepted the challenge. To their surprise and the subsequent confusion of *Mandeville* studies, they found the closing data to be verifiable: in 1349 or 1350 a Hannekin Levo became the proprietor of “l’hôtel du Heaume” in rue Basse-Sauvenière, which, moreover, was situated close to where the physician Jean à la Barbe is thought to have resided.³⁰ At the same time, however, they and other scholars found it impossible to verify the existence of Sir John Mandeville outside the text, let alone to place him in Liège. The likely reason is that Sir John does not exist outside the text, a consideration also suggested by the Liège epilogue’s neatly conventional form: the redactor has after all heightened the romance element that lies just beneath the surface in the Continental and Insular epilogue, passing from Sir John’s appropriately humble account of his knightly deeds to the striking motif of the unexpected reunion—a telltale moment if there ever was one.

In the Vulgate Latin Version, in contrast to the redactor’s usual practice, this brief romance-like epilogue is expanded to several paragraphs. In addition, Sir John’s mercenary service overseas is redefined as part of an indirect quest for useful knowledge to be shared with the world. These changes in themselves make the Liège Version’s highly compressed anecdote both more memorable and more credible, as does the fact that the Knight has already anticipated the story’s major circumstantial revelation in the account of Egypt. As we saw earlier, the Latin Sir John mentions in passing that at the Sultan’s international court (which resembles the much-visited papal court of the Defective/Egerton and Cosin interpolations) he saw a certain physician, whom he later met again in Liège, and whose urgings prompted him to compile his book—a claim that works not only to authenticate the book by providing an important witness to Sir John’s privileged status abroad, but also to ensure that *The Book* is seen as more than self-aggrandisement. That brief proleptic moment, however, hardly prepares one for the turn that the story finally takes here, as the focus suddenly splits and the audience is presented with a hopeful vision of peace in their time.

The overwritten Latin epilogue is placed immediately after the text’s brief return itinerary, whose marvelous subjects are depicted in much more negative light than they are in the Continental and Insular Versions. The final story of the man pampered by the fifty virgins, for instance, concludes with a fiercely moralizing couplet: “Because he lived like a swine / Hell will take him supine” (“Quia viuit sicut porcus, / morientem suscipit orcus”).³¹ The Latin peroration, then, does not follow a vision of universal religious unity despite pagan idolatry and error, as in the Continental and Insular Versions; rather, it

comes after the redactor's metrical allusion to the eternal punishment awaiting those who indulge in worldly delights. So far as we know, Sir John was not a sybarite, and he has moreover recently passed through the Latin redactor's purgatorial version of the infernal valley, but he still finds himself looking toward death at *The Book's* close. The difference is that here he can look forward to medical help in the first instance and spiritual aid in the last; indeed, as the epilogue begins, he is looking for the former:

Itaque anno a natiuitate Domini nostri Iesu Christ[i] 1355. in patriando [repatriando], cum ad nobilem Legiae, seu Leodij ciuitatem peruenissem [permansissem], & prae grandeuitate ac artericis guttis illic decumberem in vico qui dicitur, Bassessanemi [basse sauenyr], consului causa conualescendi aliquos medicos ciuitatis: Et accidit, Dei nutu, vnum intrare physicum super alios aetate simul & canicie venerandum, ac in sua arte euidenter expertum, qui ibidem dicebatur communiter, Magister Ioannes ad barbam.³²

And so in the year 1355 after the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, while traveling home, I came to [stayed near] the noble city of Liège, and on account of my old age and arthritic gout was laid up there in the ward called Basse Sauvenière. For the purpose of convalescing I consulted some of the city's doctors, and it happened, by God's will, that one physician arrived who was more venerable than the rest through his age and hoary hair and clearly practiced in his art, and who in that place was usually called Master John with the Beard.

This encounter between physician and traveler leads to the inevitable recognition scene mentioned in the Latin redactor's source, but it is recounted here in a manner that increases the passage's verisimilitude and so enhances its authenticating function. Most notably, the recognition now occurs as a result of conversation, rather than sight, as if to acknowledge that the two men must be older and much changed, and it is presented as a mutual recognition. In addition, *The Book's* circular proofs of its reliability are made here with reference not to someone else's book, as in the papal interpolation, but explicitly to the Knight's own work. The Latin conclusion thus depends for its credibility only on the existence of two named persons, and a previous internal reference to them, rather than on an unnamed pope and his likewise nameless international informants at the papal curia. The result, perhaps paradoxically, is a rhetorically more persuasive close: "Now as we were conversing together he dropped some remarks by which we mutually renewed our old acquaintance, which we once had at Cairo in Egypt under the Sultan Melech Mandibron [Calahelich], as I touched upon above in the book's seventh chapter" ("Is, dum pariter colloqueremur, interseruit aliquid dictis, per quod tandem

nostra inuicem renouabatur antiqua notitia, quam quondam habueramus in Cayr Aegypti apud Melech Mandibron Soldanum [Calahelich soldani], prout supra tetigi in 7. capitulo libri”).³³

The most significant thing about the encounter, though, is not the recognition scene, but the physician’s advice to his patient: “While revealing the practice of his art to my benefit, he admonished and urged me vehemently that I should organise in writing some of what I had seen in the time of my pilgrimage and journey through the world, so that it might be read and heard for [the] use [of posterity]” (“Qui cum in me experientiam artis suae excellenter monstrasset, adhortabatur ac praecabatur instanter, vt de hijs quae videram tempore peregrinationis, & itinerationis meae per mundum, aliquid digererem in scriptis ad legendum, & audiendum pro vtilitate [posteris]”). In part this represents a sort of modesty topos, intended to prevent the ostensible author from seeming too full of himself, as Rustichello in his Prologue seems too full of Messer Marco Polo, making him the world’s greatest traveler since Adam. But also, and more significantly, it is a gesture that deflects some responsibility for *The Book* from the Knight to the physician: “So at last, through his advice and with his assistance, this treatise was composed, of which I had certainly intended to write nothing until I finally reached my own regions in England” (“Sicque tandem illius monitu & adiutorio, compositus est iste tractatus, de quo certe nil scribere proposueram, donec saltem ad partes proprias in Anglia peruenissem”).

With this reference to England, the epilogue makes a sudden turn, and directs the audience’s attention away from both the marvelous eastern world and the conversation in Liège to the state of contemporary Latin Christendom. The Vulgate Latin Version is known to have been composed after 1396, but the redactor here apparently imagines Sir John writing sometime around 1355, since he has him refer to a hopeful rumor of peace in the long war between England and France. If an actual historical event is alluded to, it may be the Peace of Brétigny in 1360, when Edward III relinquished his claim to the French crown in exchange for sovereignty over the southwestern regions of France. Yet it seems unlikely that the real purpose of the epilogue’s sudden turn was to celebrate an event of nearly a half century earlier. Rather, it is more likely that it represents an attempt to close *The Book* on a hopeful note, with a vision of political harmony in a Christendom that had seen little more than discord for as long as anyone could remember. This closing passage begins, after all, with the words “I believe”:

Et credo praemissa circa me, per prouidentiam & gratiam Dei contigisse, quoniam [quum] a tempore quo recessi, duo reges nostri Angliae, & Franciae, non cessauerunt

inuicem exercere [prelia,] destructiones, depraedationes, insidias, & interfectiones, inter quas, nisi a Domino custoditus, non transissem sine morte, vel mortis periculo, & sine criminum grandi cumulo. Et ecce nunc egressionis meae anno 33. constitutus in Leodij ciuitate, quae a mari Angliae distat solum per duas diaetas, audio dictas Dominorum inimicitias, per gratiam Dei compositas: quapropter & spero, ac propono de reliquo secundum maturiorem aetatem me posse in proprijs, intendere corporis quieti, animaeque saluti. Hic itaque finis sit scripti, in nomine Patris, & Filij, & spiritus sancti, AMEN.³⁴

And I believe that the above adventures happened to me by God's providence and grace. For from the time when I started traveling, our two kings of England and France did not cease to wage mutual [war,] destruction, depredations, ambushes and killings through which, unless protected by the Lord, I could not have passed without death or peril of death, and without a great accumulation of evils. And lo, now, dwelling thirty-three years after my departure in the city of Liège, which lies only two days' journey from the English sea, I hear that through God's grace the said enmity of those lords has been settled. Wherefore also I hope and aim to be able to attend for the rest of my riper years to my body's respite and to my soul's salvation at home. Here then is the end of my writing, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the holy spirit. Amen.

The ideological end, then, toward which the Vulgate Latin Version of *The Book* has been moving is a unity quite different from and much narrower than that posited in the Continental and Insular Versions. Indeed, in the light of this unexpected epilogue, the Latin redaction's eastern tour has to be seen largely as a diversion from the woeful state of things at home, which is now projected to be changing for the better. In contrast, the larger imagined world through which the text has passed and which has been left behind without any sort of summary comment remains fragmented, and the imperiled pagan souls for whom Sir John occasionally requested prayers are apparently given up for lost as the Knight looks to his own salvation. Yet despite its chauvinistic narrowness both here and throughout, the Latin redaction proved to be one of the most widely circulated and influential of *The Book's* isotopes, rivaling the *Mandeville*-author's own, such as we have it—which means that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century audiences were no less inclined to accept a mixture of information, marvels, and uncritical religious rigidity than they were to accept the very different authorial combination of information, marvels, and a critical religious relativism. Whatever else the medieval East may have been, it was, like *The Book of John Mandeville* itself, a textual space within which fundamentally distinct views of the world could be articulated.

Conclusion

“MEDIEVAL WRITING DOES NOT PRODUCE variants; it is variance.” Such was the founding assumption of the present study, and its validity has been fully confirmed by the isotopic evidence laid out in my reading of the mandevillean multi-text. So too has its utility. If nothing else, this reading has shown that recognizing variance as essential to medieval writing—rather than as an accident to be repaired by a textual scholarship founded on the belief that only the untouched authorial original is of critical interest—allows us to see individual works as it were in parallax. Thus seen, the objects of attention shift slightly and reveal things that one might otherwise have overlooked, either about the works themselves or, by extension, the culture in which they were produced, circulated, and reproduced. Instead of collating versions in order to travel backward toward an absent *fons et origo*, an ideal text whose plenitude diminishes all of its actual instantiations, one lays them side by side in order to trace each textual tributary (in both senses of the word) outward, viewing the individual details of this verbal flux as potentially significant, as the product of an active and often engaged reception and rewriting enabled by the specific material conditions and cultural attitudes associated with medieval textmaking.

In the present case, the (re)production of significant variance starts well before *The Book of John Mandeville* itself was originally compiled. Both the *Mandeville*-author’s principal underlying intertexts—William of Boldensele’s *Liber* and Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio*—represent written records that partly rewrite the forms that were available to their authors, and they both came to the *Mandeville*-author in Jean le Long’s variant French translations, as well as in some form of their original Latin. In reproducing these two texts, as we saw, the author did more than simply splice them together; he overwrote and augmented each of them with words rewritten from still other texts, ranging from the biblical through the fictional and the historical to the scientific.

The resulting dialogic variation on its precursors and summa of eastern

lore was then released into the world, presumably in a single form, whereupon scribes, translators, and redactors all began the task of reproducing the *Mandeville*-author's compilation in the differently weighted versions that I call isotopes. Sometimes the reproductive changes were minor, as in the case of the Continental and Insular Versions, which differ in small but interesting ways from each other, if not also from the original whose trace they are thought to represent. Sometimes, however, the changes were great, as in the case of the Bodley, Metrical, von Diemeringen, and Vulgate Latin Versions, which differ as much from each other as they do from the authorial version that indirectly stands behind them.

Seen in its most general terms, this isotopic variance occurs along a remarkably wide spectrum: at one end lies diction (such as Velser's rendering of the French "diverse" as the German "wunderlich"); at the other, disposition (such as von Diemeringen's displacement of the lengthy account of Saracen beliefs and practices from the middle of the text to its very end, and with it some of *The Book's* passing references to religious diversity). In between these two mainly formal poles lies a fascinating and informative range of rhetorical and ideological variance, the result of attempts by *The Book's* intermediaries to heighten or tone down certain effects, to make particular claims look more convincing or less unsettling, and also to endorse or resist certain arguments.

Such resistance as there is, is largely to be found in the widely circulated Vulgate Latin Version, which I describe as "always orthodox," because it so often breaks the Self-critical mirrors fashioned by the *Mandeville*-author in his depictions of non-Christian Others, in order to replace them with a strenuous defense of "the most holy mother Church" through which alone one is saved. Initially, the fact that only the Latin rendering produced significant variance by systematically working against the grain of its indirect source might seem to expose a considerable gap between the Latin intellectual world and that of the vernacular. Yet against this we have to set the four independent Insular Latin translations that do not attempt to unmake the *Mandeville*-author's imagined world, even if they resist some of its details in the manner of several of the vernacular renderings.

Indeed, the unusually widespread acceptance of *The Book's* composite world by the makers of its variant versions is as significant an index of the interests and attitudes in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Latin Christendom as the resistance transmitted in the Vulgate Latin redaction. Between them, these variant assenting and dissenting responses highlight important differences of outlook within a culture which, seen from our distant historical vantage point, can appear homogeneous and even hopelessly parochial. The dialogic responses themselves, moreover, reveal the extent to which that

culture was actively engaged in an at once popular and learned conversation about the nature and limits of the greatly expanded world in which it found itself after the middle of the thirteenth century. The *Mandeville*-author may never have been to Ynde or Cathay, but he and his various intermediaries not only out-Poloed Polo in *The Book*'s account of eastern wonders; they also raised and disseminated crucial questions about the relation of Christendom to the new old world of the East that Polo did not even think to ask, and they did so partly in response to the copious extent of the text's "choses estranges"—a better term than "marvels" to describe what *The Book* habitually offers its audience.

There is a sense, after all, in which the *Mandeville*-author's attempt to use "choses estranges" to prompt critical reflection on what is all too familiar "over here" resembles the technique of "defamiliarization" ("ostraneniye," literally "making strange") that the Russian Formalists considered the essence of the literary, but which is more than just a literary device. The specific aims of this defamiliarizing representation of the East vary according to their immediate context, but they typically involve instructing, chastising, challenging, and consoling *The Book*'s projected Christian audience, in addition to entertaining and diverting them. Not all of the author's medieval intermediaries, as we have seen, appear to have grasped or accepted the multiple designs that *The Book* has on its audience, but elements of some of its several aims persist in virtually every rendering, even when the rendering is meant, like the Bodley Version, primarily to entertain.

Part of the reason for the misunderstandings, evasions, and omissions on the part of the various redactors no doubt has to do with the shortcomings of the *Mandeville*-author's original compilation, especially on the larger level of disposition or formal arrangement. The roughly linear geographical arrangement of the guiding itinerary is obscured time and again by the bulk of diverting and instructive material that the author gathers at any one place, and the often rapid changes of focus and subject can leave one feeling puzzled by their apparent randomness and purposelessness. Just when it appears that a significant pattern of juxtapositions is emerging in the text (such as in the passage from Prester John's splendid yet ascetic realm through the Assassins' sensual Paradise into the infernal valley), the ground shifts and shifts again (as in the passage from the infernal valley into the survey of marvelous isles that depicts not only a series of frivolous diversities, but also the naturally faithful paradise of "Bragmey," "Oxidrate," and "Gysonophe"). No wonder then that the intermediaries who attempted to give voice to *The Book* in their own language sometimes failed to see what, in my view, the *Mandeville*-author was doing, especially on the ideological level.

Such criticism apart, however, one has to acknowledge *The Book's* notable literary strengths, particularly in the Continental and Insular Versions, as well as in an intelligent and finely written redaction like the Egerton Version. Certainly, the present study has shown that the *Mandeville*-author can be considered a minor master of vernacular prose at the level of the paragraph or the page: more than a little of what he borrows from William or Odoric, for example, becomes genuinely richer and more memorable in his fabricating hands, taking on a compelling verbal life of its own. By the same token, it has demonstrated how subtle the text can sometimes be in attempting to bring the audience around to its point of view on a given subject, such that in places its words almost have the force characteristic of the best writing in any age—the coercive force, that is, that can temporarily overcome whatever contrary assumptions, predispositions, and prejudices we bring with us to our reading. Indeed, even if my reading has exposed the often unsettling gaps, inconsistencies, *non sequiturs*, and banalities of the *Mandeville*-author's compilation, it has also revealed the extent to which, paradoxically, the sheer cultural alterity of these inadequacies sometimes gives them a kind of aesthetic effect.

The Book of John Mandeville is not a medieval masterpiece, and its encrypted author has left at least a few highly unattractive traces of himself in his work, most obviously his extreme anti-Jewishness. Whether he was a young noble educated in the arts, as Deluz suggests, or a cleric, as Seymour supposes, seems to me impossible to say for sure, even at the end of this detailed analysis of his habits as a compiler, although two elements of the text—its recurrent concern with the practice of the Faith, and its habit of quoting the Psalter as “evidence” in untranslated Latin—make Seymour's position slightly more attractive. What can be said, however, is that both the author's work and that of his intermediaries—the mandevillean multi-text—have shown themselves to be highly responsive to the sort of close reading normally reserved for canonical texts. If a careful scrutiny of the *Commedia* or the *Canterbury Tales* reveals what breathtaking artistic heights later medieval culture was capable of, a careful look at *The Book of John Mandeville* and its isotopes gives us a fascinating portrait of the lay of the ordinary written landscape—a landscape inhabited and also defined by the ever-growing number of people from various social groups who had access to books, and whose tastes ran to a historically specific mixture of the pious, the informative, and the diverting, as well as the popular and the learned.

Notes

Preface

1. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, esp 1–22. “Olde bokes”: Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowls*, line 24, in *The Riverside Chaucer*. For a systematic study of literary remaking, see Genette, *Palimpsestes*.

2. My reasons for preferring the medieval to the modern editorial title are given at the beginning of chapter 3 (see pp. 64–65 below). As Deluz notes (*Livre*, 31), “travels” did not become part of *The Book*’s English title until 1568, and the French “voyage” was not used until 1729. For the various titles and *incipits* under which *The Book* circulated, see Bennett’s list of manuscripts: *Rediscovery*, 265–334. The designation *The Book of John Mandeville* follows the common medieval formula “the book of N.” (on which see Hirsch, *Printing*, 8), and probably derives from its self-characterization as a “livre” or “livrette” (LMT, 2: 231, and *Buke*, 3 n. 16; and cf. *SJMR*, 4; *HMT*, 1: 4).

3. Stock, “Historical,” 48.

4. Cerquiglini, *Eloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris, 1989), 111 (“Or l’écriture médiévale ne produit pas de variantes, elle est variance”); English translation quoted from Nichols, “Introduction,” 1.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. “Subjected Plain”: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 12, line 640; “navel” (“*umbilicum terrae*”): Jerome, *Commentarium in Ezekiel II*, quoted from Arentzen, *Imago*, 218.

2. Columbus, *Diario*, 291 (English), 290 (Spanish); the translators omit “(dize el),” de las Casas’s signal that he is not paraphrasing but quoting. Christian Europe’s continuing fascination with Jerusalem can be seen on several sixteenth-century maps depicting the Americas (see Portinaro and Knirsch, *Cartography*, plates 14, 36, 47).

3. *Divisament dou monde*, or description of the world, is a common medieval title for Polo’s book, and I prefer it to the modern editorial title, *The Travels*, which, like *Mandeville’s Travels*, misrepresents a descriptive text as a personal narrative itinerary.

4. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, III: 824 (this and all subsequent Chaucer citations from *Riverside Chaucer*).

5. Orosius, *Seven Books*, 7 (quotation), 8, 10–11 (on northeastern Africa).

6. “Christian topography”: Bagrow, *History*, 41. On the world maps, see Arentzen, *Imago*, Brincken, “Mappa” and “. . . ut describeretur,” and Woodward, “Reality.” Woodward cautions that a central Jerusalem was *not* the norm for the entire medieval period (“Medieval,” 341–42). World maps were probably seen by a great many people,

given the numbers in which they survive (1100 maps are known, of which about 900 are found in manuscript books: Woodward, “Medieval,” 286), and their place in public religious art (Kupfer, “Lost”). On the traditions behind Columbus’s interest in Jerusalem, Paradise, and “the Indies” (i.e., the Americas), see Kadir, *Columbus*.

7. *Gesta Regum*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series 2: 395, quoted from Southern, *Making*, 71.

8. Chrétien, *Cligés*, lines 28–331; Froissart, *Chroniques*, 37–38 (Prologue to the third redaction of the first book).

9. “Transference”: Curtius, *European*, 29. “We Christians” (“nos, qui veri sumus Christiani, non dicam decima, sed et vicesima pars non sumus”): *Directorium*, 822 (cf. 820). Columbus, *Diario*, 19 (English), 18 (Spanish).

10. For a definition of “imagined community,” see Anderson, *Imagined*, esp. 5–7, 12–19.

11. For an overview of Latin Christian Europe’s relations with the wider world between 1000 and 1500, see Phillips, *Medieval Expansion*, which has a very useful bibliographical essay (260–84). Lach, *Century*, 3–48, surveys the European concept of Asia since antiquity. Older but still useful are Beazley, *Dawn*, and Olschki, *Marco*. Two lively and informative accounts of medieval travel writings on the East are Campbell, *Witness*, and Westrem, *Critical Edition*, 14–284; also useful is Tellenbach, “Zur Frühgeschichte.” There are many helpful studies of related topics: for example, Kedar, *Crusade*, Metlitzki, *Matter*, and Muldoon, *Popes*.

12. *The Book*’s textual history is discussed in the last section of this chapter; on the sources, see note 18 below.

13. On John of Marignolli, see Brincken, “Die universalhistorischen Vorstellungen.”

14. Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen,” 180–94, lists “notices” of the Knight and *The Book* to the late nineteenth century; Moseley, “Metamorphoses,” briefly charts the work’s mainly Insular transformations to 1750; Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 219–60, traces its influence and reputation, especially in England, to the nineteenth century; Deluz, *Livre*, 267–361, offers the most up-to-date reception history, including a useful summary of scholarly views; and Ridder, *Jean*, 262–346, examines the transmission, circulation, and reception of von Diemerdingen’s German translation both in manuscript and in the early printings.

15. Purchas, “Briefe,” 363. The term “multiplicity of writing,” taken from Williams (*Marxism*, 145–50), indicates that *The Book* cannot be understood simply as a “creative fiction,” since it makes use throughout of a whole range of writing (e.g., history, ethnography, political geography), albeit within a (partly?) fictitious framework.

16. For an overview of the evidence for *The Book*’s contested authorship, and a summary of the debate to c. 1960, see Lejeune, “Jean.” Two similar studies have recently appeared, but neither is as helpful or as careful, especially in presenting the evidence; Seymour, *Sir John*, rearticulates his own long-held position, seeing the author as an anonymous “native French-speaker” working on the Continent (23), while Phillips, “Quest,” offers “little more than guesswork” (255). Deluz, *Livre*, 3–24, surveys accounts of Sir John Mandeville as knight, physician, explorer, and savant.

17. The six extant manuscripts of le Long’s translations form an anthology that originally consisted of William’s and Odoric’s books, along with Polo’s *Divisament*, letters between the Great Khan and the Pope, *The Book of the Estate of the Great Khan*,

Prince Hayton of Armenia's history of the Mongols, and Ricold of Montecroce's pilgrimage account. As they have come down to us, the copies include the Continental Version of *The Book*, but since the other texts and le Long's translations all predate *The Book*, it seems likely that an earlier version of the collection without *The Book* was circulating in the early 1350s. Five manuscripts are listed in SMT, 277–78, and described in Odoric, *Voyages*, cvii–cxv; Deluz, *Livre*, 123 n. 102, adds a sixth copy. In *Sir John*, 23, Seymour names le Long as “an ideal candidate for authorship” of *The Book*, but concedes that this is pure “conjecture.”

18. Deluz, *Livre*, 57–58 (summary), 39–93 (discussion of “the traveler’s ‘baggage’” and the *Mandeville*-author’s practice as compiler), and 428–91 (“tableau des sources”). Still useful are the two pioneering studies, Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen,” and *Buke* (Warner’s introduction and notes), as are the editions by Hamelius, Letts, and Seymour.

19. Deluz, *Livre*, 62–67 (Latin; quotation from 67); on 71, she suggests that the sources may point to a young noble educated in the Arts who spent time overseas for religious or military reasons, before returning home, where he turned to reading books about the East.

20. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, VII: 3211–12.

21. “Mendacious”: Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 103; “sincere”: Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 216; “Ulysses”: John Bale, quoted in *LIM*, 23; “marvel-monger”: Hale, *Renaissance*, 32; “artist”: Campbell, *Witness*, 161. Fabulist: Montégut, “Sir John,” esp. 238–39, 256; “anti-Papal”: HMT, 2: 15; “encyclopedia”: SMT, xx; “antipodal”: Butturff, “Satire,” 157; “index”: Zacher, *Curiosity*, 6 (quotation), 132; “realistic prose”: Campbell, *Witness*, 122; “First book”: Deluz, *Livre*, 364, 365; renunciation and “hymn”: Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 24, 38.

22. Howard, “World,” 1, 2; chapter 3 of Howard’s *Writers* abridges and slightly revises this essay. On the terms “worklike” and “documentary,” neither of which Howard uses, see LaCapra, “Rethinking,” 29–33: “the work is situated in history in a way that gives it documentary dimensions, and the document has worklike aspects” (30).

23. Woolf, *Room*, 79. For examples of recent readers and their use of source studies, see Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 15–53, and Campbell, *Witness*, 154–58.

24. Campbell, *Witness*, 9 (“this patchwork of plagiarism”), 126 n. 8, 130–31, 139, 140, 141, 150 n. 29; Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 24, 31. On compilation as research and creation, see Le Goff, “Une collecte,” 44; Stock, “Historical,” 53, makes a similar point. Carruthers, *Book*, 218–20 (quotation from 220). See also Constable, “Forgery” and Hathaway, “Compilatio.” Plagiarism in travel books can be found far beyond the Middle Ages: see, for example, Said, *Orientalism*, 176, 184, and Adams, *Travelers*, 11–12.

25. The terms of this useful formulation of cultural history are defined in Williams, *Marxism*, 121–27. Cf. Lotman, *Universe*, 127: “everything contained in the actual memory of culture is directly or indirectly part of that culture’s synchrony.”

26. “Travel liar”: anyone whose fictional book was taken as real (Adams, *Travelers*). “Verray”: Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I:72.

27. Stock, “Historical,” 49, his emphasis.

28. “Device”: Frye, *Anatomy*, 248, in his attempt to name the “genre that addresses a reader through a book”; Frye rejects “history” and “scripture” for “fiction”

as the best term “to describe the genre of the printed page”—the term used by Bennett, Campbell, Howard, and Zacher for *The Book*. “Questions”: Godzich and Kittay, *Emergence*, 93, adding textual, reception, and intellectual history to their list. Bennett, *Rediscovery*, and Deluz, *Livre*, are the indispensable guides to these questions.

29. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, V: 28. For an “Orientalist” reading of the Squire’s Tale, see Kathryn L. Lynch, “East Meets West.”

30. Frye, *Anatomy*, 25. Bennett, *Middle English*, 359–60.

31. Frye, *Anatomy*, 350. The value of this expanded “literary” universe can be seen in the following studies, not all of which are indebted to Frye or discourse studies, but all of which examine the rhetorical and formal strategies of nonliterary texts: Boon, *Other*; Campbell, *Witness*; Greenblatt, *Marvelous*; Kadir, *Columbus*; and Said, *Orientalism*.

32. “Signifying practice” is a term used in an “essay in prosaics” (Godzich and Kittay, *Emergence*); it is defined as the repeated performance of a given signifying act (e.g., speech), or “a mixture of types of communication” (speech is usually accompanied by facial expressions and bodily gestures), and “a shared, social act, an act of social signification,” which is fundamentally culture-specific (3, and see 3–13). Prose is thus as much a signifying practice as verse, ritual, or performance, and it is by no means universal, even in cultures with writing. On (vernacular) prose, modernity, and historicism, see *Emergence*, 139–75, 187–209. Richard, *Récits*, 44, contains a brief chronology of the first direct composition of prose travel writings in French, Italian, German, and Catalan; it becomes frequent only toward the end of the fourteenth century.

33. Said, *World*, 157.

34. Woolf, “Defoe,” in her *Common Reader*, 86.

35. On others’ emendations as “authoring,” see Carruthers, *Book*, 196, who notes that revision “was not limited to the first author” (214). *Mandeville*-author’s request: *Buke*, 3, and LMT, 2: 231. Velser: *SJMR*, 178 (see also “Loose Ends” in chapter 8 below).

36. Lewis, “Genesis,” 38; Foucault, *Archaeology*, 23.

37. “*Mouvance*” is Zumthor’s coinage: *Essai*, 507; see also 43–46, 126, and, for more recent discussions, his “Intertextualité,” and Speer, “Wrestling,” 317–19. On medieval texts as versions rather than objects, see Bruns, “The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture,” in his *Inventions*, 44–59. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, X: 57–58.

38. Cf. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 35, and Campbell, *Witness*, 140. Greenblatt reads the related Egerton Version, occasionally collating it with the Cotton, but since he says nothing about their relation to each other, his collation serves little purpose. Letts, *Sir John*, is a partial exception to the practice of reading one (English) version for all, but his book was written before the French manuscripts had been studied and is conceptually unclear as well as factually vague about textual history, sometimes assuming that every word in every text or version is authorial (e.g., 76, 161–62).

39. Ridder, *Jean*, 224–61. Critics have more often taken a negative view of changes to the presumed authorial text: Moseley, “Metamorphoses,” 6; Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 145.

40. Steiner, *After Babel*, 271.

41. In my as-yet unpublished study “The One and the Many: A Critical Synopsis of Scholarship on the Authorship and Versions of *The Book of John Mandeville*.”

42. On *forma tractatus* and the related term *forma tractandi* (form of the treatment), see Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 118–59. On Velser's faulty exemplar, see *SJMR*, clv–clxi. These versions all differ in the way they mark the text's unfolding, since like many medieval writings *The Book* received a variety of "editorial" treatments. The printed text of the Continental Version, for instance, is divided into 98 sections, each headed by a short rubric, while that of the Insular Version is divided into 35 such sections. Their isotopes tend to follow these divisions, though not devoutly: Velser's translation, for example, contains 117 parts, the Cotton 36, and the Egerton none at all. There is no study of the textual divisions, a potentially important index of *The Book's* early reception, apart from a few pages on the Dutch Version (Ganser, *Niederländische*, 321–26).

Chapter 2: Here Begins the Book of John Mandeville, Knight

1. On textual "actualization," see Lotman, *Universe*, 63–81.
2. Quoted from an "Introduction to Cato" in Minnis and Scott, eds., *Medieval*.
16. On the prologue in western rhetorical tradition, see Hunt, "Rhetorical."
3. On "long-distance specialists," see Helms, *Ulysses' Sail*, 109–10.
4. *Buke*, 1; cf. LMT, 2: 229. The text of the exordium varies very little between the two editions; throughout this chapter, as typically throughout *Writing East* as a whole, I quote from the Insular Version. Notable variants in the Insular manuscripts or between the Insular and Continental Versions are placed in square brackets.
5. *Buke*, 2–3; cf. LMT, 2: 231.
6. Campbell, *Witness*, 143 ("two"), 142 ("drift"), 143 ("dependent" to "sense"), 144 ("collapsed"). Artfulness there certainly is in the exordium; the question is whether it is "quasi-parodic." Repetition and restatement are basic to medieval rhetoric, not necessarily signals of parody. Parody was important in medieval writing, yet, as scholars have noted, it can be difficult to tell the serious from the playful (Huizinga, *Waning*, 238; Bakhtin, *Dialogic*, 69–70). Campbell's claim (144) that the exordium is playing with the truth claims of prologues is plausible but is not immediately suggested by the text.
7. Workman, *Fifteenth*, 50 (see also 29 and 39).
8. *Buke*, 1–3; cf. LMT, 2: 229–31. The Cotton and Defective Versions mark the larger unit by making the second sentence ("because y") echo the first: "For als moche as . . . And for als moche as" (HMT, 1: 1, 3; cf. *TPE*, sig. A1, A2). Velser's Version also signals the exordium's structure, but by bringing the "I" into the opening: "Do ich von hayman uß für . . . über mer. . . Da von das lang ist das man nie ist über mer gefaren. . . Ich" ("Since I traveled from my homeland . . . over the sea. . . For it has been a long time since anyone traveled over the sea. . . I": *SJMR*, 1, 3); his solution has an ocular echo in some manuscripts, where the latter "I" is made visually prominent (note to line 11).
9. *Buke*, 127 ("la terre des Cristiens"); cf. LMT, 2: 375. On "l'espace mandevillien," which is based on the opposition "par-deçà . . . par-delà," see Deluz, *Livre*, 169–76.

10. *Buke*, 2; cf. LMT, 2: 230. The Cotton translator renders “mayns des estranges” as “hethene mennes hondes,” insisting on faith rather than symbolic nativity as the grounds for conquest (HMT, 1: 2); both terms are omitted in Velsler’s rendering (*SJMR*, 2).

11. *Buke*, 1; cf. LMT, 2: 229.

12. *Buke*, 1; cf. LMT, 2: 229. Warner’s edition reads “luy corps,” but “li cueors,” which is also the Continental reading, is cited as a variant in two manuscripts; since the Cotton Version also reads “herte” (HMT, 1: 1), “cueors” is likely the common reading.

13. “Ground”: Said, *World*, 114.

14. Jesus is of course not the grammatical subject of “il ly plesoit,” but he is the topic in a semantic sense, as patient rather than agent.

15. For a helpful discussion of beginnings, see Said, *Beginnings*, esp. xiii, 5, 372.

16. Frye, *Anatomy*, 327.

17. *Buke*, 1–2; cf. LMT, 2: 229–30.

18. *Buke*, 2, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 230; the reference is the same for the quotations in the next paragraph.

19. This prophetic conclusion echoes Ciacco’s prophecy with its concluding list of the three sparks that ignite human hearts: “superbia, invidia e avarizia” (Dante, *Inferno*, 6.73–75; I am indebted to Scott Westrem for recalling the echo). The three English versions (Cotton, Defective, and Egerton) deriving from the Insular Version all omit the reference to the holy father: see *Buke*, 2; cf. HMT, 1: 3, and *TPE*, sig. A2.

20. Julian, *Revelation*, chs. 16–21. *Heures*, folios 156v, 157, in *Illuminations*, 160–63.

21. Although working from a text without the authorial exordium (the Czech Version), the maker of the Pictorial Version has grasped the nature of *The Book’s* depictions of Jesus; his paintings of Jesus being crowned with thorns (illustrating a scene from the visit to Constantinople) are notable for their restraint, and two of them depict Jesus’s face and body as mirroring those of the religious and political rulers (“Bishop” Annas and Pontius Pilate) overseeing his terrible fate (see Krása, *Travels*, plates 12–14).

22. *Piers* survives in some fifty manuscripts, the Defective Version in nearly forty. Middleton considers this connection “rather surprising,” overlooking *The Book’s* points of contact with “the moral and speculative austerities of *Piers*,” because she regards the former as “the romantic Mandeville” (“Audience,” esp. 105–6).

23. Reform was also the aim of most fourteenth-century crusading propagandists, who saw “the Holy Land crusade alone” as “a public method of Christian renewal” (Tyerman, “Holy,” 109).

24. Polo, *Il Milione*, 3; cf. *Travels*, 33. Since *Il Milione* is hard to obtain, I also cite here (and elsewhere) an easily accessible English translation, whose wording, however, I do not normally follow, preferring a more literal rendering of Rustichello’s French.

25. Bale, *Illustrium Majoris Britanniae Scriptorum . . . Summarium* (Ipswich, 1548), fol. 149b, quoted and translated in *LLM*, 23–24. Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 260. See also Purchas, “Briefe,” 363; Addison, *Tatler* No. 254 (Thurs., Nov. 23, 1710), in *Works*, 392; “Sir John Mandeville’s Travels,” 293; and Letts, *Sir John*, 163–64.

26. Lotman, *Universe*, 64.

27. *Buke*, 1. HMT, 1: 1 (omission). *TPE*, sig. A1 (inclusion).

28. *Buke*, 1 (“And”), 2 (“Pis”). HMT, 1: 1 (omission). *TPE*, sig. A1 (omission).

29. *SJMR*, 1. HMT, 1: 1; *TPE*, sig. A1; *Buke*, 1.
30. *SJMR*, 1, emphasis added. Cf. Egerton: “oure Lady Saint Marie” (*Buke*, 1).
31. *SJMR*, 2.
32. *SJMR*, 2–3.
33. *LIM*, 25. In this and all subsequent quotations, Hakluyt’s use of “v” for “u” (and vice versa) and “j” for “i” has been normalized.
34. *LIM*, 25.
35. Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 210 (definition), 224–28 (crusading to the East after 1291).
36. *Buke*, 2–3; cf. LMT, 2: 231.
37. These are the concerns—minus title, mode of treatment, and place in the scheme of learning—of the most popular twelfth-century prologue: Minnis, *Medieval*, 19–25.
38. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 29. Zacher, *Curiosity*, 140.
39. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 29. Deluz, *Livre*, 34, also suggests that the text moves away from the traditional framework of climates and extends the Mediterranean oikumenē, noting that the account of the earth’s sphericity and the possibility of circumnavigation is placed “à peu près au centre de l’ouvrage.” For the text anticipating extending its horizons, see *Buke*, 21–22, 26, 60, and 64; LMT, 2: 250, 255, 295, and 300.
40. On Fulcher’s and Jacques’ far-eastern marvels, see Wittkower, “Marvels,” 58–60. Also relevant are moments in other works: William of Rubruck, “Journey,” 220; *Itinerarium*, 332; Joinville, *Life*, 197–98, 211–13, 282–88; Paris, *Chronicles*, 273–74. Latin miscellany: James, *Descriptive*, 1: 137–45 (see 2: 291–93 for a similar collection). French miscellany: Ross, “Methods,” 63–65. On le Long, see introduction, note 17. Westrem, “Fixing,” discusses the far-eastern horizon in pilgrimage writings, suggesting that *The Book* was made possible by the moment “when Boldensele pauses in the Egyptian desert . . . and calculates the distance to the Great Khan” (8).
41. Polo, *Il Milione*, 3 (quoting the passages out of order); cf. *Travels*, 33.
42. Quoted from Marchello-Nizia, “L’historien,” 14 (her emphasis). Deluz, *Livre*, 23–24, cites an earlier study by the same author in support of her inclination to admit “the manuscript’s autobiography” as “the most solid” evidence of the *Mandeville*-author.
43. For some examples, mainly literary, of the medieval practice of borrowing others’ experiences for one’s own “I,” see Spitzer, “Note.”
44. Cf. *Buke*, xxxix–xl, and SMT, xvi.
45. English *wanderlust*: *Buke*, 81; cf. LMT, 2: 321; and see Westrem, “Two,” 69–70. English “geographical culture”: Woodward, “Medieval,” 306–7, and Brincken, “Mappa,” 147–50. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I: 43–78. Explorer/scientist/knight: Carter, *Road*, 73–74. Knightly authors: Richard, *Récits*, 37.
46. *Buke*, 3; cf. LMT, 2: 231. On the fourteenth-century nobility’s crusading interests, see Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 209. Keen, “Chaucer’s Knight,” shows that the English nobility of Chaucer’s day were as taken with chivalry and crusading as their forebears.
47. This is the point that Marchello-Nizia makes about the function of the “quasi-juridical” formula “I so-and-so, such-and-such” in historical writings (“L’historien,” 24).

48. Carruthers, *Book*; see 71 (moral virtue); 12–13, 259–60 (social function).
49. Vogels, “Ungedrucken,” 8–9 (love of Latin); Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen,” 200–01 (deception).
50. On vernacular geography and the use of a “courtly” language for “clerical” functions, see Deluz, *Livre*, 121–26.
51. Carruthers, *Book*, 182 (“ethical memories”), 214 (“respecting the *res*”); see also 26–27, 181, 183 (copiousness); 10, 164, 212–14 (making the text one’s own).
52. *LIM*, 25–26.
53. *LIM*, 26. Note the use of “opus” (“work”) rather than “liber” (“book”).
54. *SJMR*, 3, emphasis added; the audience is also addressed as “you” in the exordium’s first part.
55. *SJMR*, 4.
56. *Buke*, 3; *HMT*, 1: 3 (“many”); the Defective Version, in Pynson’s printing, mangles this phrase (“good company/ and of many lordes”: *TPE*, sig. A2v).
57. *HMT*, 1: 4.
58. *HMT*, 2: 23, note to 1: 4/1; *SMT*, 231, note to 3/36; cf. Howard, “World,” 4 n. 1.
59. *LMT*, 2: 419, emphasis added; cf. *Bodley*, 3.
60. Stokes, ed. and trans., “Gaelic Maundeville,” 3, 5 (Irish on 2, 4); O’Mahoney also omits the authorial apology, concluding the opening with a catalogue of “the lords who were over the Gaels when [he] put this into Gaelic”: see 5, 7 (4, 6).
61. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, mgf 205, fol. 1ra; quoted from Ridder, *Jean*, 37, 225. According to Ridder, who is preparing an edition of the von Diemeringen Version, this copy contains the text closest to the original translation; my usual citation texts (the two manuscripts in *OD* and occasionally *ODIO*) stand at a slight remove (*Jean*, 28–29): cf. *OD*, 1; *ODIO*, 3. The reference to Latin appears also to make the Vulgate Latin Version a source, but Ridder finds no decisive evidence of this (187).
62. Danish: Lorenzen, ed., *Mandevilles Rejse*, 1 (my thanks to Scott Westrem for translating this passage for me). Czech: Šimek, ed., *Cestopis*, 21.
63. Mgf 205 (see note 61 above), fol. Vvb–1ra [sic]; cited in Ridder, *Jean*, 229.
64. Mgf 205, fol. 1ra; quoted from Ridder, *Jean*, 226, emphasis added, 227; Ridder’s quotation seems to be missing the bracketed words “sye . . . iß,” which are added from *OD*, 30–31 (quoting University of Kansas, Watson Library Summerfield MS. C 18, which here is fuller than Crosby’s other text, Summerfield MS. E 16); the other bracketed words are added from the same copy, which also differs in ways not noted here. Cf. *ODIO*, 13, which also contains the apparently missing words needed to make sense of the passage.
65. *Metrical*, 3 (lines 11–12, 16, 17, 23, 30, 32–34).
66. *Metrical*, 3–5 (lines 35–47, 53, 71–76), 15 (line 462).

Chapter 3: “Choses Estranges”

1. LMT, 2: 231; cf. *Buke*, 3, which lacks “orrez.”
2. The text in effect calls itself a compilation in the epilogue: Sir John “compiled these things [described here] and put them in writing” (“cestes choses compilez et mises en escript” (*Buke*, 155; cf. LMT, 2: 411, which reads “copulees”).
3. WBL, 237 (“libellum”), 240 and passim (“post haec”), 248 (“vidi . . . tres elephantes vivos”), 273 (lament), 276 (diligence), 274 (“Pro locis”); this edition has a text at some remove from the original. Scott Westrem is currently preparing a critical edition. The *Liber* survives in twenty-nine manuscripts (six of them in le Long’s translation). On William and his work, see Beckers, “Orientreisebericht,” Deluz, “La ‘géographie,’” Schnath, “Drei,” 464–77, and Westrem, *Critical Edition*, 39, 125–31.
4. Greenblatt’s claim that “Mandeville’s appropriations are signalled . . . by an intensification of the personal” (*Marvelous*, 32) is obviously mistaken. On augmentation, see Genette, *Palimpsestes*, 298–313.
5. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, 95 (vol. 1, ch. 22). See Campbell, *Witness*, 127–30, on “the urge toward amplification” in pilgrim’s guides.
6. John de Dondis, *De balneis*, quoted from Kimble, *Geography*, 172–73.
7. Schönborn, “Bibliographische Untersuchungen,” 11, who compared the Latin with the English Cotton Version, accepting its claim to be the *Mandeville*-author’s own work.
8. *Buke*, 3–4; cf. LMT, 2: 232. “Impersonal Everyman”: Howard, “World,” 2.
9. Ludolph, *Description*, 3–4. Wey, *Itineraries*, 6. For a rare remark on practical matters, see *Buke*, 30, and LMT, 2: 259–60 (and cf. WBT, 315; WBL, 252).
10. *SJMR*, 5. The Vulgate Latin also recognizes the difficulty, but speaks on the matter as Sir John (*LIM*, 26). On this problem, see Taylor’s remarks in LMT, 1: lii, lvii–lviii.
11. *Buke*, 11; cf. LMT, 2: 239, which lacks the final sentence of the quoted passage.
12. *OD*, 63.
13. “Paradoxography” originally names the Hellenistic genre of “rhetorically heightened descriptions of peoples and marvels in other lands” (Friedman, *Monstrous*, 6), but clearly applies to parts of *The Book*’s matter and manner.
14. WBL, 237–39; cf. WBT, 298–300.
15. “Miscorrect”: Westrem, *Critical Edition*, 223. “Dream-wise” is Campbell’s apt term for the way that *The Book*’s parts are constructed (*Witness*, 151). “Easy”: SMT, xvii; Seymour’s comments on the author’s “perhaps . . . unpremeditated” control and frequent “verbatim” adherence to his authorities (xvii–xviii) do not bear scrutiny. “Information”: Friedman, *Monstrous*, 55.
16. *Buke*, 11; cf. LMT, 2: 239, where the letters are missing and a marginal note in the manuscript directs the reader to the end of the text, where the alphabet is given along with the explanation that the omission resulted from a faulty exemplar (2: 412).
17. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 29, who makes the contrary claim.
18. De Poerck, “Corpus,” 45, 31–32. All three interpolated alphabets appear in the von Diemeringen Version (Ridder, *Jean*, 185). In contrast, the Vulgate Latin Version omits these alphabets, but then it omits the original six as well, perhaps because its redactor thought them corrupt or incorrect, or more likely since they had no punc-

tuating function in his reduced periphrastic text (the reduced Bodley Version likewise omits all the alphabets). Strange and difficult to copy, the alphabets were frequently dropped by scribes, and they appear inconsistently in the extant versions and manuscripts of *The Book*. The only studies of the alphabets are a few pages in Letts, *Sir John*, 151–60, and Derolez, “Uit de Geschiedenis,” both of which were written without full knowledge of *The Book*’s textual transmission.

19. WBT, 300, emphasis added (according to the editor’s note here, le Long’s exemplar was one of several Latin manuscripts reading “in” for “coram”); cf. WBL, 238–39. *Buke*, 4–5, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 232–33, which differs by the bracketed words, among others (page references the same for the quotation in the next paragraph).

20. *Buke*, 5; TPE, sig. A3.

21. Montégut, “Sir John,” 253. On the *Pseudo-Turpin* analogue, see Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 52, and HMT, 2: 25 note to 5/18. For a reading similar to Montégut’s, but stressing the significance of the apple’s roundness, see Zacher, *Curiosity*, 134–35.

22. Fazy, “Jehan,” 44, argues that the *Mandeville*-author saw the city and cites Tafur. “Distorted”: *Buke*, 158, note to 4/16, emphasis added. “Lie”: Campbell, *Witness*, 145.

23. White, “Value,” 14. Bennett’s claim that “symbolism required that it [the orb] should have fallen out” (*Rediscovery*, 52) approaches mine, but does not explain why no other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writer describing the statue felt the requirement.

24. “Hoax”: Campbell, *Witness*, 126, emphasis added, who recognizes that *The Book* is “something more than that.” Hanna, “Mandeville,” 123, calls the invention of “Mandeville” . . . a literary hoax of impressive proportions.” Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 33, 34.

25. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 34.

26. Bromyard: quoted from Owst, *Literature*, 155 (Owst’s emphasis), whose chapter “Fiction and Instruction in the Sermon *Exempla*” (149–209) documents preachers going to history, travel books, wonders, natural history, and so on for their “truthful” matter. On medieval attitudes toward truth and falsity generally, and modern responses to them, see Constable, “Forgery.” On classical, medieval, and modern views of fiction, reality, and historiography, see Jauss, “Communicative,” and Nelson, *Fact or Fiction*, esp. 1–55.

27. *SJMR*, 5, emphasis added. Bodley Version: LMT, 2: 420, emphasis added; cf. *Bodley*, 7, which lacks the phrase about wind or human agency. *LIM*, 27.

28. *OD*, 36–37, emphasis added.

29. *Buke*, 108; cf. LMT, 2: 353: “et qui voudra, il men croira, sil lui plaist, et qui ne voudra, ie nen puis mais” (“and whoever wants to will believe me, if it pleases him, and whoever does not—I can no more”). See chapter 6 for discussion of the claim in context.

30. Mabillon, *De re diplomatica*, quoted from Brooke, “Approaches,” 103–4, whose view of fabricators like Geoffrey of Monmouth supplies the other quoted phrases (120).

31. “Ex mandato”: WBL, 239. “Especialtee”: *Buke*, 7; cf. LMT, 2: 235. In the Bodley Version’s Rawlinson copy, this claim is rendered so as to support Sir John’s

claim to Englishness: “And I hadde oon of the thornes that is at Parys, with the wiche I presentid to our lord of Engeland” (LMT, 2: 421).

32. WBL, 239; WBT, 300. *Buke*, 5; cf. LMT, 2: 233. Howard, “World,” 6. “The Jews”: HMT, 1: 6; *TPE*, sig. A3; *Buke*, 5; and *SJMR*, 5. Rawlinson: LMT, 2: 421.

33. Neither the German Dominican nor the English Knight was as honored in Constantinople as the Moroccan Ibn Battuta, who in the early 1330s had an audience with the Greek Emperor, from whom he requested a guide so that he might see the wonders of the city and report them back home (*Travels*, 2: 505–6, 513).

34. *Buke*, 9 (“creance,” emphasis added), 10 (“vsure”); cf. LMT, 2: 237, 238. *LIM*, 27.

35. The principal exceptions are Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 50–51, and Braude, “*Mandeville’s Jews*.”

36. *OD*, 40. *Buke*, 7; cf. LMT, 2: 235.

37. Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 74.

38. *LIM*, 27; the reference is the same for the quotation in the next paragraph.

39. *Buke*, 12; cf. LMT, 2: 240. This legend differs from those recounted in Constantinople in that the contemporary signs of past presence are now attributed not to portable relics, but to a local marvel, the first of many precisely located religious marvels noticed in *The Book*. The account of St. John partly derives from the *Liber*, where William wrote that “he died and was buried” (“decessit et sepultus est”; WBT, 301 textual note), but three copies, including the one edited by Grotefend, recall a legend from the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and read “he placed himself in his tomb alive” (“se deposuit in monumento vivus”; WBL, 240)—a change followed by le Long (WBT, 301) and enhanced still further by the *Mandeville*-author.

40. *Buke*, 14; cf. LMT, 2: 242. *LIM*, 28. For analogues see *Buke*, 163–64, and HMT, 2: 34.

41. *Buke*, 73–74 (Sparrowhawk), 12 (Hippocrates’ daughter), emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 312, 240. On the island legend’s partial analogues, see Deluz, *Livre*, 215–18, Loomis, “Fier Baiser,” Huet, “Légende,” and *Buke*, 163–64. Unable to find a source for it, two scholars have suggested that the *Mandeville*-author gathered this legend “sur place” (Fazy, “Jehan,” 45; Deluz, *Livre*, 217).

42. Review of *The Buke* (1891), 439.

43. On the concept of generic dominant, see Jauss, “Theory,” esp. 81.

44. Relevant here are Gurevich’s comments on the modern belief in medieval credulity: “the border between the likely and the unlikely did not lie where it does today” (*Medieval*, 55). Two succinct discussions of the medieval marvelous are Le Goff, *Medieval*, 27–44, and Zumthor, *Essai*, 137–41.

45. LMT, 2: 426.

46. *Buke*, 12–13; cf. LMT, 2: 240–41. The 1371 manuscript of the Continental Version makes the chivalric challenger simply “vn cheualier du chastel de Rodes,” but the Insular reading is supported by Velser’s and von Diemeringen’s translations: “ain Sant Johanßer ritter von dem spittaul von Rodis” (*SJMR*, 16) and “eyn fromer ritter in sancte Johannes orden von Rodyss” (*OD*, 68).

47. *Buke*, 13; cf. LMT, 2: 241.

48. *Bodley*, 19; the Rawlinson copy lacks the forceful words “thow man” (LMT, 2: 427). *Buke*, 13; cf. LMT, 2: 241.

49. *Buke*, 13; cf. LMT, 2: 241. Velser and von Diemeringen: *SJMR*, 16, and *OD*, 70.
50. *Buke*, 13; cf. LMT, 2: 241.
51. In an essay on the analogous Melusine story, Le Goff argues that this almost always precisely localized and historicized story (whose place and time vary with the telling) has to do with the knightly order's ideas of economic prosperity (*Time*, 205–22).
52. Deluz, *Livre*, 218. Friedman, *Monstrous*, 76. Howard reads the two erotic legends differently, possibly “see[ing] in them a suggestion of salvation and damnation, spiritual life and spiritual death” (“World,” 6).
53. *LIIM*, 28. Rawlinson: LMT, 2: 426.
54. *OD*, 66. HMT, 1: 14, emphasis added; cf. *TPE*, sig. B1, and *Buke*, 1. *SJMR*, 15 (“wol”); LMT, 2: 426 (“foule”); *Bodley*, 17 (“oryble”). *Metrical*, 20 (lines 674–75), emphasis added.
55. *Metrical*, 20 (lines 671–73), and *Bodley*, 17, 19; cf. the ending of Gower's Tale of Florent (*Confessio Amantis*, 1: 1841–49). *OD*, 68.
56. *Buke*, 12–13; HMT, 1: 15; *TPE*, sig. Biv; *Bodley*, 19. *OD*, 69.
57. *Buke*, 13 (“common womman”); cf. HMT, 1: 15, and *TPE*, sig. Biv. *Bodley* Version: LMT, 2: 427, the Rawlinson copy being a little more elaborate here than the Musaeo (cf. *Bodley*, 19).
58. *SJMR*, 16; *OD*, 69–70 (quoting C 18; E 16 lacks the comment on the damsel's willingness to sin).

Chapter 4: *Marvels, Miracles, and Dreams*

1. *Buke*, 64; cf. LMT, 2: 300.
2. WBL, 244; cf. WBT, 305. For the *Mandeville*-author's adaptation, see *Buke*, 17 (and cf. 28); cf. LMT, 2: 245 (257); elsewhere (62; 2: 297), he traces a direct route to Jerusalem, recognizing that many pilgrims cannot go beyond, or do not want to.
3. Theoderich, *Description*, 1. To my knowledge, there is no full survey or sustained analysis of medieval pilgrimage writing; for a brief overview, see Howard, *Writers*, 11–53, and Campbell, *Witness*, 15–45; for the fourteenth century, see Atiya, *Crusade*, 155–86, 490–96; for a generic typology, see Davies, “Pilgrimage.” A good introduction to the practice and its lore is Sumption, *Pilgrimage*.
4. Roux, *Les explorateurs*, 233. “Taxonomy”: Gurevich, *Categories*, 80. Two important exceptions to Roux's claim, apart from William's *Liber*, are John of Plano Carpini's *Ystoria Mongalorum* and William of Rubruck's *Itinerarium*.
5. Howard, “World,” 9.
6. WBL, 244–46; cf. WBT, 306–7.
7. WBL, 246; cf. WBT, 307. William's error about the site of Muhammad's tomb was common, being made even by the well-informed William of Tripoli (*Tractatus*, 587).
8. WBL, 246–47 (quoting from 247); cf. WBT, 308–9 (309). On “la beauté du monde” in *The Book*, see Deluz, *Livre*, 223–30.
9. WBL, 247–52 (quoting from 249 and 252); cf. WBT, 309–14 (311, 313).

10. *Buke*, 27; cf. LMT, 2: 256, 412, where, like the Greek alphabet (see ch. 3 n. 16 above), the letters were not in the scribe's exemplar and so have been placed at the end.

11. *Buke*, 18; cf. LMT, 2: 246.

12. William of Tripoli's Sultan "denounces the keeping of concubines" ("concubinas habere reprobatur"; *Tractatus*, 588), but Sir John's has many (*Buke*, 20; cf. LMT, 2: 248). Foreign sexual practices, which later become a prominent element in orientalist and anthropological writings, are rarely noticed in medieval writings; see chapter 7 n. 1 below, and for a survey of the basic texts, Westrem, "Medieval."

13. *Buke*, 21; cf. LMT, 2: 249.

14. *Buke*, 21–22, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 250; the printed Insular and Continental texts vary here, the former lacking the bracketed words, the latter, the emphasized ones.

15. *Buke*, 24, 26; cf. LMT, 2: 253, 254 (quoting the Continental Version on Adam's apples, whose reading is confirmed by Warner's textual note on the Insular Version).

16. *Buke*, 26; cf. LMT, 2: 255. Like the account of the old Babylon, this passage is used also to link *The Book's* earlier and later parts through a reference to balm in Ynde at the limits of Alexander the Great's imperial travels (see the later section on "Sir John among the Saracens").

17. *Buke*, 27, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 256. Two other "simplices" are Symon Semconis (*Itinerarium*, 84, 85) and Ludolph von Suchem (*Description*, 72).

18. *OD*, 132, emphasis added.

19. *SJMR*, 34, note to line 4, punctuation added; for its appearance in the first redaction, see 123, and see xxi–ii on the passage's historical context.

20. *Buke*, 24 (Insular and Egerton quotations); cf. LMT, 2: 252. Jacques de Vitry's *Historia* quoted from *Buke*, 170, note to 23, line 16.

21. *Buke*, 24, emphasis added to both quotations; cf. LMT, 2: 253. This story recalls St. Anthony's meeting with a satyr in Jerome's *Vita S. Pauli*, but see Deluz, *Livre*, 437, for the suggestion that it was borrowed from Gervais of Tilbury's *Otia imperialia*.

22. LMT, 2: 436. On the link between the Egerton and Bodley Versions, see my "One." The Metrical Version goes the other way here, reducing the legend to the mention of a local (secular) attraction: *Metrical*, 40 (lines 1449–60).

23. *Buke*, 31; cf. LMT, 2: 260, 283 (cf. *Buke*, 50–53, which lists the Dead Sea, the river Jordan, John the Baptist's head, and Samaritan customs). Howard, "World," 9 ("relic").

24. WBL, 260; cf. WBT, 324.

25. *Buke*, 35; cf. LMT, 2: 265.

26. *Buke*, 35–36; LMT, 2: 265–66. Robert Southey borrowed this tale for "The Rose."

27. WBT, 324; cf. WBL, 259, which contains some theologizing omitted by le Long.

28. *Buke*, 36; cf. LMT, 2: 266. The legend of Mary's milk receives a more elaborate and dramatic telling in Ludolph von Suchem's *Description*, 95–96.

29. WBL, 261 ("in"), 268 ("et quis"), 268–69 ("simplices"); cf. WBT, 327, 334, 335–36.

30. WBL, 267; cf. WBT, 333.

31. WBL, 265. *Buke*, 38–39 (quoting from 39); cf. LMT, 2: 269.

32. *Buke*, 39–40 (quoting from 40); cf. LMT, 2: 270–71. These words recall the prediction that ends the historical introduction to Jerusalem (*Buke*, 38; cf. LMT, 2: 268).

33. See the relevant sections in chapter 5 and my “Defining.”

34. *OD*, 173 (“all”; E 16); *ODIO*, 59 (“all”). *SJMR*, 46, 54.

35. *OD*, 178; E 16 has Sir John merely see the spots (180); cf. *ODIO*, 61, where the verb is also “kissed” (“ghekust”). *LIM*, 35. *SJMR*, 53.

36. LMT, 2: 269; cf. *Buke*, 38. *SJMR*, 51–52. *LIM*, 36.

37. *Buke*, 26; cf. LMT, 2: 255, and *LIM*, 31. This passage is echoed when Sir John recounts his “hands-on” knowledge of the living diamonds of Ynde (79–80; 2: 318–21).

38. This is the gesture adapted from William, who makes it much earlier, on leaving Egypt: WBL, 253; the passage is lacking in le Long’s rendering (WBT, 315).

39. Rev. of *The Buke*, 446 (“thumping” 439). *Buke*, 18; cf. LMT, 2: 246. Nearly every medieval traveler has a tale to tell about his (or her) achievements and privileges; nor does the habit and rhetorical device belong only to travelers from Latin Christendom: see, for example, the claims of the Russian abbot Daniel (in Wilkinson, ed. and trans., *Jerusalem*, 154–58) and the Moroccan Ibn Battuta (*Travels*, 2: 282, 283, 451).

40. *Bodley*, 75. *Buke*, 134 (see also 84). The Bodley Version’s two copies are full of the phrase “I John Mandeville,” each using it slightly differently: *Bodley*, 7, 57, 79, 87, 89, 101, 129; and LMT, 2: 421, 432, 447, 450, 459, 460, 465 (twice), 466, 474, 477.

41. Some have argued: Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen,” 227, 306; Fazy, “Jehan”; Metlitzki, *Matter*, 220–39; and Deluz, *Livre*, 59–62. Semeonis, *Itinerarium*, 98 (Latin), 99 (English). Christian mercenaries: Phillips, *Medieval*, 147; the Church’s approval: *Riverside Chaucer*, 801, note to line 63; and cf. Ludolph, *Description*, 70–71. Kempe, *Book*, 75. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 32 (whose evidence comes from translators’ additions).

42. Kedar, *Crusade*, 70; see also Richard, “La vogue,” 558, and, on Christians who converted and married into Egypt’s ruling family, Metlitzki, *Matter*, 238 (also 136–92 on the intermarriage theme in history and romance). Grady, “‘Machomete,’” 287 n. 21 (my thanks to the author for allowing me to consult this article before it was published).

43. On the *histor*, see Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature*, 265–67. For pilgrim-histors using negative evidence to positive rhetorical effect, see, for example, Egeria, *Egeria’s Travels*, 107–08, WBL, 274, and Ludolph, *Description*, 117–18.

44. For other discussions of *The Book’s* account of Islam, see Deluz, *Livre*, 246–49, Grady, “‘Machomete,’” and Morrall, “Der Islam.” On medieval Christian views generally, see Southern, *Western*, and Daniel, *Arabs*, 169–94, 233–66. The *Mandeville*-author’s main source on Islam, William of Tripoli, “is relatively well informed” (Kedar, *Crusade*, 180). The account, as rendered in the Defective Version, was printed in London c. 1515 as a pamphlet by Wynkyn de Worde, who had printed the Defective Version on three earlier occasions. The “little-known, very rare and quite absurd” pamphlet is discussed in Beckingham, “Misconceptions,” 607–9, who is unaware of its origins and so thinks it “of interest that such nonsense could be written . . . when the Ottoman empire was at the height of its power” (607–8). In fact, the text was written a century and a half earlier, and was based in part on thirteenth-century information, but its concerns and hopes were still relevant in sixteenth-century Christian Europe.

45. Howard, “World,” 3. *Buke*, 66, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 302.

46. *Buke*, 66 (Egerton interpolation), 67 (“et en ceo”); cf. LMT, 2: 304.

47. *Buke*, 68–69; cf. LMT, 2: 304–5.

48. William of Tripoli insists on the efficacy of God’s word above all at the close of his *Tractatus* (597–98). Concern for the state or conversion of non-Christians was common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and sometimes included the Jews (e.g., Margery Kempe, *Book*, 141, 204, 250); the *Mandeville*-author shows no interest in the Jews’ fate.

49. Deluz, *Livre*, 236–45, discusses *The Book*’s account of “lestat des Crestiens.” The Egerton Version makes the Jewish-Christian equation explicit (*Buke*, 69); the Cotton Version distinguishes the mutual infidelity by making the Jewish worse (HMT, 1: 88).

50. *Buke*, 69; cf. LMT, 2: 305. Cf. Caesarius, *Dialogus*, 1: 187–88; *Dialogue*, 1: 211–13. On the scene’s possible origins in Caesarius, see Chauvin, “Le prétendu séjour,” who uses the link to argue against the *Mandeville*-author’s having visited Egypt. Just as the sketch of Saracen beliefs was used for a separate pamphlet, so this colloquy was made the center of the oddest and most autonomous of *The Book*’s isotopes, the English Stanzaic Fragment: see Seymour, ed., “Mandeville and Marco Polo,” and chapter 6 below.

51. *Buke*, 69, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 306. The prophecies mentioned here recall those current during the 1221 siege of Damietta (Burnett, ed., “Apocryphal,” 154–55).

52. *Buke*, 69; cf. LMT, 2: 306.

53. *Buke*, 69–70; cf. LMT, 2: 306. For a fuller discussion of the reference to international espionage, see Grady, “‘Machomete,’” 279–81.

54. On Clement’s decree, see Burns, “Christian-Islamic,” 1408.

55. *Buke*, 70, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 306–7.

56. *Buke*, 71; cf. LMT, 2: 308.

57. The von Diemerigen Version does however retain information from the colloquy in its displaced account of the Saracens: see Ridder, *Jean*, 247–49.

58. *SJMR*, 24; cf. LMT, 2: 430–31, and HMT, 21. *Buke*, 18 (“I wald”), 20 (“soudan”; cf. LMT, 2: 248). Metlitzki tries—entirely unconvincingly, to my mind—to identify the named Sultan so as to date the *Mandeville*-author’s visit, having him leave Egypt “in the winter of 1342” (“Voyages,” 233–37, quotation from 236). *LIM*, 31. Four Insular manuscripts (two French, two Latin) also intervene where the Vulgate Latin does, but with a long Latin letter addressed to the Pope by “Balthazardy,” the Sultan’s son, mocking the course of Christian expansion overseas (see Vogels, “Ungedrucken,” 15, and HMT, 2: 40–42). The letter resembles a curious fifteenth-century English epistle by “Baltizar” to the English and French kings (see Bühler, ed., “Satirical”).

59. For Jean’s role in *The Book*’s scholarly reception, see Lejeune, “Jean,” 418–20.

60. *SJMR*, 86. *LIM*, 42, emphasis added.

61. *Buke*, 69 (Insular and Egerton Versions, emphasis added); cf. LMT, 2: 306.

62. *Buke*, 69, emphasis added. *LIM*, 45, emphasis added.

63. *LIM*, 45.

64. The only other redactor who moved the colloquy—leaving aside von Diemerigen, who omitted it—is the maker of the Bodley Version’s Rawlinson copy, and his change is nowhere near as effective rhetorically. Working to keep like with like, the

Rawlinson maker displaces the colloquy into the account of Egypt, where it turns up after Sir John mentions declining the Sultan's offer of land and a princess (LMT, 2: 431–32).

65. The Metrical Version is another exception, but because of its pedestrian verse.

Chapter 5: Earthly Symmetry and the Mirror of Marvelous Diversity

1. The step of extending the focus to take in the Christian West as well as the larger East was made in the 1340s by an anonymous Spanish Franciscan, in his brief vernacular *Book of the Knowledge of All the Kingdoms, Lands, and Lordships that are in the World*, and in 1388–89 by Philippe de Mézières in his lengthy, allegorical *Songe du vieil pelerin*.

2. *Buke*, 72; cf. LMT, 2: 309, whose wording as usual varies slightly. The different rubric in both versions likewise presents the geographical extension as unexceptional.

3. *Buke*, 72, 73; cf. LMT, 2: 310. I rarely translate “Ynde” as “India,” since the vague medieval term usually designates upper (or eastern) Asia, even though the thirteenth-century encounter with Cathay revealed an East beyond the traditional East; on the Hereford map, for instance, the large letters “INDIA” run north to south across the Asia just below the circle of Paradise. Depending on the authority, Ynde could have two or three parts; *The Book* follows the tripartite tradition, although the differences between the Insular and Continental Versions testify to the vagueness of the medieval notion of the territory (*Buke*, 79, and see the useful note on 197; LMT, 2: 318).

4. OPR (= *Relatio*), 413, 467; cf. OPV (= *Le chemin*), 3 (quotation), 304. OPR is not a critical edition, and the text varies considerably in the extant manuscripts (some sixty in Latin, twenty in Italian, nine in French [of two separate renderings], and five in German). On Odoric, his work, and its transmission and translations, see OPR, 381–411; OPV, i–clvi; Odoric, *Merveilles*, v–xxii; Reichart, “Eine,” 536–41; and Westrem, *Critical Edition*, 45–46, 174–94. For an overview of Christian missions beyond the Holy Land, see Phillips, *Medieval*, 73–101, 266–68 (bibliography); for a fuller narrative, see Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys*.

5. *Buke*, 73 (“bele dame”) 74 (other quotations); cf. LMT, 2: 311, 312.

6. In the Latin text edited by Wyngaert, this passage is followed by an account of the Khan's respect for the cross originally added by Friar Marchesino of Bassano, but not so identified there (OPR, 492–94; see also OPE, 270–71); in le Long's rendering, the passage has been more appropriately placed in the account of the Khan (OPV, 375–76).

7. *Metrical*, 57 (lines 2121–38, Stonehenge), 67 (2505–28, Pikteine); cf. *Buke*, 95, 147.

8. The Liège redaction has never been printed, but its Ogier passages have been transcribed from Chantilly, Musée Condé MS. 699 (1414) alongside von Diemerin-gen's and the Vulgate Latin's: see OD, lxix–lxxxvii; see also LMT, 2: 483–98, where those of the latter two are translated; for a discussion of Ogier in all three versions, see Ridder, *Jean*, 156–59, 168–69, 179–85, 236–40. On Ogier generally, see Togeby, *Ogier*; it has little on *The Book* (190–92, on the Danish Version), but offers a summary (158–

72) of the chivalric hero in the work of Jean d'Outremeuse, who may have made the Liège Version.

9. "Porche d'accès": Deluz, *Livre*, 171. *Buke*, 72; cf. LMT, 2: 309–10, which differs by the bracketed words, among others, and includes a brief political geography of Libya.

10. Howard suggests that the *Mandeville*-author "had no map, real or imagined, but pieced together his geography from books" ("World," 10 n. 2), a claim undermined by the vestibular geography, among other passages. Arguing that the author produced a "mappemonde" at once "traditionnelle et prophétique" (*Livre*, 169–90), Deluz asserts that the places named in *The Book* finally "burst the [mappamundi's] framework and require recourse to a globe with two hemispheres" (189)—a point that applies only to the spatial framework, not to the theological.

11. *SJMR*, 93.

12. *OD*, 293–94.

13. *OD*, 297; this vague reference to written authorities gives the interpolation away; the *Mandeville*-author always names texts when citing them.

14. *LIM*, 45. The earlier printing, *Itinerarius*, was apparently produced in Strasbourg, c. 1483–86 (Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 361); it has two headings for this chapter, in the table of contents (sig. A2v) and before the chapter itself (ch. 24, sig. D6v), both of which differ in wording but not in substance from each other as well as from that of Hakluyt's text.

15. *LIM*, 45. Oresme, *De causis*, 137 (English translation), 136 (Latin); see 50–69 for the editor's discussion of Oresme's arguments in their historical context. The more common view was that marvels are not to be explained, but wondered at as signs of God's power (cf., for example, the introduction to a short thirteenth-century Latin text called *Mirabilia mundi*, quoted in Burnett and Dalché, "Attitudes," 154).

16. *LIM*, 45.

17. *LIM*, 45–46; this last assertion may well have been inspired by Sir John's similar comments in his account of the Khan in the Continental and Insular Versions (see chapter 6 below). Moseley, "Metamorphoses," 8, suggests that the passage was "attached to the text at some unknown date," but given its probable inspiration and its consonance with other such changes in the Latin text, it seems likely that it was part of the original late fourteenth-century redaction. Quoting from Moseley's summary as if it were a verbatim translation, Greenblatt mistakenly cites the passage to show that in Hakluyt's day "marvels were becoming more embarrassing than authenticating" (*Marvelous*, 30). A shorter version of the Vulgate Latin's argument appears in at least one copy of von Diemerigen's Version, but displaced into the introduction to Ynde: see note 35 below.

18. OPV, 135; cf. OPR, 445. *Buke*, 90; cf. LMT, 2: 331.

19. E.G.R. Taylor, in LMT, 1: lvii.

20. On the several assertions of Jerusalem's centrality, see my "Defining." On the sources, see Deluz, *Livre*, 471–73, who does not mention the *Directorium* (but see HMT, 1: 103 note to 120/16). For Polo, see *Il Milione*, 171; *Travels*, 252–53; Polo several times remarks on the pole star's location (*Il Milione*, 58, 172, 199, 230; *Travels*, 103, 254, 288, 293). According to Peter of Abano, physician and astrologer, Polo saw the Antarctic pole when he lost sight of the Arctic (Yule, ed. and trans., *Cathay*, 3: 195–96). Summary: *Buke*, 90–93; LMT, 2: 331–35.

21. Psalm 74: 11–12 and Ezekiel 5: 5 were the main biblical texts used to argue

for Jerusalem's centrality, both of them as a result of a consequential gloss in Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel* (see Arentzen, *Imago*, 216–22, esp. 218).

22. On this variant close in the two main French versions, and its implications for textual criticism, see Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 135–38, and De Poerck, "Tradition," 135–38.

23. "Discriminate": Parry, *Age*, 23–24, by way of proving medieval "European geographical ignorance." On the "habit of quantifying," see Kaye, "Impact," especially 254–56. Citing the *Mandeville*-author's use of *De sphaera* and the astrolabe measurements, Taylor, in LMT, 1: li–liv, and Deluz, *Livre*, 150, credit him with some university education, Deluz also noting the rarity of numerical calculations in travel writings (148).

24. *Buke*, 90; cf. LMT, 2: 331.

25. *Buke*, 200 note to 92/14. The same later proof also provides a good example of mutating numbers (LMT, 2: 335, and *Buke*, 92).

26. Chaucer, *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, Pt. II, conc. 25, in *Riverside Chaucer*, 676. On this point see North, *Chaucer's Universe*, 61 (and Fig. 12), who notes what Chaucer knew and accounts for: that "finding the latitude was not a simple matter of taking the altitude of the pole star, for that is not at the pole itself" (73); it is not clear whether the *Mandeville*-author knew this, given his conflation of the pole stars with the poles themselves, but the fact remains that his measurement is roughly correct, according with Chaucer's for the roughly parallel Oxford (*Treatise*, Pt. II, conc. 22, in *Riverside*, 675).

27. See Crone, *World Map*, plate 7, and Sommerbrodt, *Ebstorfer*, Tafeln 11, 12.

28. *Buke*, 90; cf. LMT, 2: 331.

29. Taylor, in LMT, 1: li.

30. The *Atlas*'s schematic depiction is on its third sheet: see Freiesleben, *Katalanische*, Tafel 6 (colour), and Woodward, "Medieval," 356 fig. 18.77 (black and white).

31. *Buke*, 81, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 321; this principle is restated in "la terre de Pigmeinez," where all human offspring are pygmy-sized, whatever their parents' stature, "for such is the nature of the land" ("qar la nature de la terre est tiel"; 103; 2: 348).

32. OPV, 426; cf. OPR, 483. *Buke*, 130; cf. LMT, 2: 380. *The Book*'s account recalls a claim made some three hundred years earlier by Gerald of Wales in his *Topographia Hiberniae* (*History*, 31, 54–57), which also contains the classical account of the barnacle geese (41–42). More interesting than their similarity, though, is the difference between the claims. Invoking the idea of the earth's marvelous symmetry to justify his treatise on the lesser-known wonders of the West, Gerald denigrates the copious East with his own version of climate theory, and sets the mildness of the Irish climate against the poisonous heat of the East, a view that eerily anticipates the negative tenor of many later European accounts of the exotic and the tropical. Gerald's account of Irish marvels differs from *The Book*'s account of eastern ones in that he allegorizes and moralizes most of them.

33. *Buke*, 149–50, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 404.

34. Zacher, *Curiosity*, 140, 149–50 (who suggests that Paradise is *The Book*'s "true destination" [151]), and Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 42–43; cf. Deluz, *Livre*, 260.

35. LMT, 2: 333 (cf. *Buke*, 91); *SJMR*, 115.

36. The local people do not leave Ynde because other countries are worse and the journey out is too dangerous; no contrast is made with "nostre pais" (*OD*, 329–30). LMT, 1: 117 n. 1, notes that this version contains an interpolation here against "dis-

believing traveller's tales simply because they are strange," given that God can create wonders of all sorts. The interpolation clearly derives from the Vulgate Latin's chapter on *mirabilia*, but is evidently found only in some copies of the German (Letts's source appears to be Johann Prüss's 1484 Strassburg printing); it is not in the two manuscripts edited in *OD*, nor in the Middle-Low-German edition (*ODIO*, 103–4).

37. In the Metrical Version, though, the excursus may simply have been lost with four lost leaves (*Metrical*, 113–14 n. to line 2001).

38. In Seymour's view, the Defective manuscripts form five subgroups (A–E), the nine manuscripts of subgroup A (and one independently derived copy) retaining the excursus; the passage is missing from the five manuscripts of subgroup B, and presumably from the remaining manuscripts of the other subgroups, since "C, D, and E represent successive dependent stages in the transmission of the text of sub-group B" ("English Manuscripts," 169). None of the manuscripts retaining the passage is available in a printed edition.

39. HMT, 1: 175. *Buke*, 90 (Insular and Egerton); cf. LMT, 2: 332.

40. *SJMR*, 113, emphasis added to the second quotation.

41. *OD*, 347–48 (cf. *ODIO*, 109–10); the passage goes on to cite the empirical proof from the Continental and Insular Versions (the spear which casts no shadow at midday at equinox). For a fuller discussion of this passage, see Ridder, *Jean*, 249–53.

42. *LIM*, 50, 53, emphasis added. The early printing (*Itinerarius*, sig. Frv [ch. 31]) has "Ybernia" along with England and Scotland, whereas Hakluyt's edition has "Bohemia."

43. *LIM*, 36.

44. *LIM*, 36–37, emphasis added. On *The Book's* account of Jerusalem's location in the Continental, Insular, and Vulgate Latin Versions, see my "Defining."

45. Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, VII, ii, 21; quoted from Wittkower, "Marvels," 49 (translation modified), 198 n. 47 (Latin), an excellent survey of the Indian tradition; also useful are Wittkower, "Marco Polo," Roux, *Les explorateurs*, 255–301, and two studies by Le Goff, *Time*, 189–200, and *Medieval*, 27–44. That some medieval people still regarded Ethiopia as an important wonder site is revealed in the Bodley Version's Musaco copy, which relocates several Yndian isles to Ethiopia (*Bodley*, 89, 91, 95). Polo, *Il Milione*, 161; on Polo's treatment of marvels, see Badel, "Lire," who argues that Polo stands apart from his medieval predecessors in being aware that marvels can be hard to believe (12). "Another world": Jordanus, *Mirabilia*, 37 (cf. 12), who is almost as credulous as Johannes Witte de Hese. Of course, not all medieval writers on the East trafficked in the traditional marvels: John of Plano Carpini mentions only a smattering, virtually all of them heard about rather than seen, while William of Ru- bruck offers none.

46. According to Deluz, who defines "marvel" more strictly than I do, virtually all of *The Book's* more than fifty wonders turn up in this region: *Livre*, Annexe IV. 2 (407–9), lists forty-eight (fifteen human, sixteen animal and vegetable, fifteen natural, and two cultural). Deluz distinguishes marvels from legends, listing sixty-seven of the latter in Annexe IV. 1 (402–6); most of these are religious, but a small number—e.g., the gold-digging ants and the Amazons—could be considered marvels: hence my "more than fifty." In Annexe IV. 3 (410–11), Deluz situates *The Book's* diversities on a modern map of northern Africa and Asia; in Annexe IV. 4 (413), she does the same for the monstrous races, comparing their placement in *The Book* with that on the Ebstorf

and the Hereford maps and in ten medieval texts from Solinus to Sydrach (*The Book* largely stands apart in placing most races on the isles surrounding Ynde; see also 259–60); the textual comparison is continued in Annexe IV. 5 (414–15), which reveals that the *Mandeville*-author almost always expands on the received list of characteristics for each race.

47. Hale, *Renaissance*, 32 (quotation); Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 50–51; and Montrose, “Work,” 25. Cf. also Letts’s comments in LMT, 1: 141 n. 2.

48. OPV, 239; cf. OPR, 457. *Buke*, 100, substituting the Continental “font” for “sont”; cf. LMT, 2: 344. On the Plinian races, see Friedman’s excellent *Monstrous*, esp. 1–25.

49. This is especially true of the Ebstorf map, which depicts the earth as the body of the crucified Christ and places the African monster gallery just inside his bleeding left hand.

50. Quoted from Bevan and Phillott, *Mediaeval*, 102.

51. “Theoretical”: Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 46, citing Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 229–456, in making his case for “the peculiar tolerance that is Mandeville’s distinctive achievement: a capacious, theoretical, alienated tolerance that abjures possession” (49–50). Jacob, *Possible*, vii–viii, argues that the monsters of sixteenth-century zoology were not the product of mere fantasy or ignorance, but that they existed “within the limits of the possible,” which is always thought in relation to the actual and helps define its limits.

52. *Buke*, 78; cf. LMT, 2: 317. See Deluz, *Livre*, 230–33, for the passage’s likely sources, and 213–15, for her reading, which differs in its emphases from mine. The class-based removal of breasts defines the Amazons in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la cité des dames* (see *Book*, 41 [I.16.1]), another sign that she knew *The Book*, which was readily available in her courtly milieu (Toynbee, “Christine,” shows that she used *The Book* for her earlier *Livre du chemin de long estude*).

53. OPV, 201, 202; cf. OPR, 453. *Buke*, 97; cf. LMT, 2: 340; the whole account varies slightly in wording in the two texts; the Insular Version’s more closely resembles that of le Long’s Odoric. Polo places the dog-heads on “Angaman,” an isle next to “Necuveran,” and also makes them cruel cannibals (*Il Milione*, 176; *Travels*, 258). These people in particular were associated with stories of distant missionary work, and were often central examples in the debate over the human status of monsters (Friedman, *Monstrous*, 67–75, 186–90). On the legend’s transmission, see Lecouteux, “Les Cynocéphales.”

54. OPV, 203, emphasis added; cf. OPR, 453. *Buke*, 97, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 341.

55. The *Flor* is quoted in le Long’s rendering of Nicolas Falcon’s Latin translation of Hayton’s original French (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. frcs. 1380, ch. 6, fol. 4v), as transcribed by Deluz, *Livre*, 65 (who cites it to prove that the *Mandeville*-author used le Long); cf. Hayton, *Flor*, 126 (French), 265 (Latin). *Buke*, 97; cf. LMT, 2: 341.

56. *Buke*, 97–98; cf. LMT, 2: 341. On abandoned roads and organized banditry in the fourteenth century, see Hay, *Europe*, 34. On travel in medieval Europe, see Ohler, *Medieval*, 102–7, 112–15; on travel in the East, see Roux, *Les explorateurs*, 169–99.

57. OPV, 187–88; cf. OPR, 451. Le Long's rendering of the whole differs from Odoric's Latin in several ways: the Latin question, for example, merely asks "quare hoc sic fiat" ("how this is thus done?"); details reveal that the *Mandeville*-author consulted both texts. Polo, *Il Milione*, 17; cf. *Travels*, 49–50.

58. *Buke*, 96; cf. LMT, 2: 339, which differs by the bracketed words, among others. This is one of *The Book*'s few marvels described as "contre nature," and its handling casts doubt on Bennett's claim that the author's "conception of natural law as universal makes it highly improbable that he believed at all in the unnatural marvels which he retold" (*Rediscovery*, 36–37; cf. 76).

59. This lack may be due to several lost manuscript leaves, but one cannot be sure, since *The Book*'s matter is often rearranged; the loss does cause the Calonakan marvel's incompletion, since it breaks off there (*Metrical*, 58 line 2160; and see note 36 above).

60. HMT, 1: 103. *Buke*, 98. *SJMR*, 122, 100 ("Und als").

61. *Metrical*, 49 lines 1833–34. *TPE*, sig. E7v. *OD*, 323; cf. *ODIO*, 101–2.

62. *LIM*, 46, amending "sumi sibi regimen" to "sibi sumunt reginam" and "so-lent" to "habent" after the text of the incunabular *Itinerarius*, sig. E1–E1v (ch. 25).

63. *LIM*, 51, 52. *SJMR*, 122.

64. *OD*, 381–82, quoting C 18, except for the explanation about cannibalism, which is quoted from E 16 (cf. *ODIO*, 119, which agrees more fully with the latter copy). C 18 reads thus: "Und ist iss, das sy fleisch adir beyne fynden, adir wie jn das werden mag, das essent sy naturlich doch als eyn hunt" (*OD*, 382; "And if it happens that they find flesh or bones, or as it may happen to them, they eat it naturally of course as a dog [would]").

65. Chantilly, Musée Condé MS. 699 (1414), fol. 46v, quoted from *OD*, lxxviii–ix.

66. *LIM*, 51, amending "producere" to "pro duce," following *Itinerarius*, sig. E7v (ch. 29), and Watson Library, University of Kansas, Summerfield MS. C 19, fol. 53, as transcribed in *OD*, lxxviii. This is the seventh of Ogier's thirteen appearances in the Latin text.

67. *OD*, 369–70 (editor's ellipsis), quoting E 16 rather than C 18 (the text of the former generally agrees with that of *ODIO*, 115). The reference is the same for the quotation in the next paragraph. Rhetorically, the C 18 passage is more effective than the likely original, since in it the naturalizing local explanation comes first (without mention of the salmon), then Sir John's doubts and their undoing (after he views the marvel at the king's request; *OD*, 367), and finally his reference to the salmon.

Chapter 6: Faith and Power in the Great Khan's Cathay

1. On Vincent's account, see Guzman, "Encyclopedist"; on Hayton's, see Glenn Burger's introduction in Hetoum, *Lytell*, ix–xxix.

2. Howard, "World," 4.

3. *Buke*, 125 (emphasis added), 126 and 127 (descent); cf. LMT, 2: 374, 374–75 (descent).

4. Deluz, *Livre*, 243, calls *The Book's* political portraits “quite simplistic,” and notes their lack of reflection on the relation between secular and ecclesiastical power.

5. On the historical Mongols, see Morgan, *Mongols*; on their contacts with Christians, see de Rachewiltz, *Papal*, and Sinor, “Mongols”; and on their thirteenth-century mythologization (often by demonization) and the term “Tartar,” see Connell, “Western.” Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, V: 28; on the tale’s sources, see *Riverside Chaucer*, 890.

6. On this interpolated, supplementary passage, see chapter 5 note 5 above.

7. OPV, 378; cf. OPR, 479. Circumcision was not a Mongol practice; Cordier suggests “coronation,” after Ramusio’s Italian redaction (OPV, 420 n. 26).

8. This dream is also evoked in the *Divisament*, especially in the prologue and in part of Ramusio’s Italian edition (see Polo, *Il Milione*, 6, 70–71 note; cf. *Travels*, 36, 119–20).

9. OPV, 370–71 (Odoric’s stay at court); cf. OPR, 474 (for the length of stay). *Buke*, 108 (“A peines”); cf. LMT, 2: 353.

10. OPV, 373; cf. OPR, 476. *Buke*, 108, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 353. For the commonplace elsewhere, see the letters of Friars Peregrine and Andrew in Wyngaert, ed., *Itinera*, 368, 374, or in Dawson, ed., *Mission*, 234, 235, as well as Polo, *Il Milione*, 81, 89, 109, 131, 133–34 (Z text), 137, 149 (cf. *Travels*, 136, 146, 170, 199, 201, 205, 223).

11. *Buke*, 109; cf. LMT, 2: 354. One other text—a brief thirteenth-century *Mirabilia mundi* extant in two manuscripts—makes almost the same claim, but in a single sentence (Burnett and Dalché, “Attitudes,” 155, 162 [on the link with *The Book*]). The Tartars were most commonly linked to Gog and Magog or Ishmael (Connell, “Western,” 127–29). Benjamin Braude’s forthcoming paper on “The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethno-Geographical Identity in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods” will likely serve as the starting point for future research on this subject; my thanks to the author for allowing me to read a draft version of this fascinating study.

12. *Buke*, 109; cf. LMT, 2: 354.

13. “Cham,” as Friedman notes (*Monstrous*, 100), was easily confused with “Cain,” since the three minims of “m” could be read as “i” and “n”; see “Cain’s Kin” (87–107).

14. *Buke*, 109; cf. LMT, 2: 354.

15. *Buke*, 109–10; cf. LMT, 2: 355. The wording of the “personal” claim varies in the Continental and Insular Versions; both the Cotton and the Egerton Versions render the passage in a manner closer to that of the Continental (HMT, 1: 146; *Buke*, 109–10).

16. *Buke*, 110; cf. LMT, 2: 355–56, where the explanation fails because “Changuys” is called “Cingis.” Here as elsewhere, the Insular Version appears to offer the better text.

17. *Buke*, 112; cf. LMT, 2: 358.

18. *Buke*, 113; cf. LMT, 2: 359. On the actual events, see Morgan, *Mongols*, 145–58.

19. *Buke*, 113; cf. LMT, 2: 359.

20. See Deluz, *Livre*, 88–92, for a detailed look at this reordering of Odoric’s account.

21. *Buke*, 107, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 352. OPV, 369; cf. OPR, 473. Hilka, ed., *Altfranzösische Prosa-Alexanderroman*, 152–53 (Porus’s palace).

22. Hayton, *Flor*, 121 (emphasis added), 261 (Latin).

23. OPV, 371; cf. OPR, 474, where the numbers differ slightly. LMT, 2: 363–64; *Buke*, 117; quoting the Continental Version for the first two sentences, which are closer to Odoric, and the Insular Version for the third.

24. *Buke*, 120; cf. LMT, 2: 367.

25. Polo, *Il Milione*, 53, editor's brackets; cf. *Travels*, 96–97. *Buke*, 120; cf. LMT, 2: 368. This particular comparison of the Khan with other potentates occurs in no other work, so far as I know.

26. Vincent, *Speculum historiale*, 1210 (Bk. 29, ch. 73); cf. John of Plano Carpini, *Ystoria*, 63; *History*, 25–26.

27. *Buke*, 123; cf. LMT, 2: 371.

28. The only exception is the Metrical Version, which lacks the entire account, almost certainly because of damage to the manuscript: see *Metrical*, 113–14 n. to line 2001.

29. That reference is the next to last, and laments the Khan's lack not of faith in God, but of Christianity (*Bodley*, 123; cf. LMT, 2: 473); in addition, the Cathayan portrait is displaced toward the text's close, where it caps *The Book's* eastern tour.

30. Seymour, ed., "Mandeville and Marco Polo," 42–43. For the relevant passage in Polo, see *Il Milione*, 6–10; cf. *Travels*, 36–40.

31. "Mandeville and Marco Polo," 43 (truth), 44–45 (Khan's name), 47 ("I trust"), 50 (quotations in next paragraph).

32. *Buke*, 109 (the erasures are signaled in textual notes 1 and 3).

33. *Buke*, 108; since Warner's edition (*Buke*), the Egerton Version's editors have not noticed that the redactor has displaced this last passage, and have instead created a unique interpolation and a unique omission (*Buke*, 108 n. 2, 120 and n. 5; LMT, 1: 153 and n. 4, 169–70; Moseley, trans., *Travels*, 144, 156 and note). "Suffreth wel": HMT, 1: 162.

34. *SJMR*, 131–32 ("Die singent"), 137 ("Und an der"; emphasis added).

35. *OD*, 424–25 (quoting from E 16), 421 ("horet"; from C 18).

36. *OD*, 436–37 (following E 16, which here agrees with the text of *ODIO*, 135–36, but omitting in the first sentence the phrase "frunde und" in "syn frunde und nachkommen," since it makes no sense and is lacking in the other two texts known to me; C 18 contains a different, though still related, text).

37. *LIM*, 60.

38. *LIM*, 59; same reference for the quotation in the following paragraph (emphasis added).

39. *Buke*, 116; cf. LMT, 2: 362. *LIM*, 58.

40. *LIM*, 58; I alter the Latin syntax in the first quotation, where "diabolica inuolutione mens" governs its own verb ("non videt"), but this does not alter the point of the polemic.

41. *LIM*, 58; same reference for the quotation in the following paragraph.

42. *LIM*, 65.

43. Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 45.

44. *Buke*, 128; cf. LMT, 2: 377. Hayton, *Flor*, 129–30, 269 (Latin). Polo tells a similar story, but it ends with many Saracens and the persecuting Caliph converting, and reveals the differences among the eastern Churches (*Il Milione*, 20–22; cf. *Travels*, 54–57).

45. *Buke*, 128, substituting the variant "quoy" for the "sois" of Warner's copy

text here; cf. LMT, 2: 377, which differs by the bracketed words and lacks the second part of the last quoted sentence (“et lour enemis . . . ferir”).

46. *Buke*, 128–29, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 377–78.

47. As it would take too long to recount the variance in Christian belief, the *Mandeville*-author exemplifies it with the Jacobites and their confession “to God only, not to man” (“a Dieu soulement, non pas a homme”; *Buke*, 59 [all further citations here]; cf. LMT, 2: 293–94). Reworked from Jacques de Vitry’s exposé of the Jacobites’ errors (*Historia orientalis*, 144–48 [ch. 76]), this account is no less balanced than the depiction of Greek Christianity adapted from the same negative source. Thus, although the passage ends by endorsing Catholic confession, the Jacobite practice is shown to be motivated, not erroneous, as the Jacobites cite the Bible, Augustine, Gregory, and Hilarius to justify their practice—which is further justified through an implicit appeal to natural law: “Et verite est qe ceste confessioun est primitiue et naturelle” (“And the truth is that this confession is primitive and natural”).

48. *Buke*, 129; cf. LMT, 2: 378, which offers an elliptical form of the Pauline citation; as Deluz notes (*Livre*, 242), the Latin derives (imperfectly) from Gratian’s *Decretum* (dist. II. can. 13); she also suggests (242–43) that the emphasis on frequent communion reveals the author as a layman influenced by the *devotia moderna*.

49. OPV, 425; cf. OPR, 482. *Buke*, 131; cf. LMT, 2: 380, which refers to “les roys des x. lignees,” and lacks the phrase about God’s bringing the mountains together.

50. On the “rare and late” version, see Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate*, 81, who traces the legend’s origins and history (see also Barry’s critical review of Anderson). For a recent overview of the legend’s medieval history, see Michael, “Typological.”

51. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, 1215 (Bk. 29, ch. 89), drawing on Simon of Saint-Quentin, who asked Georgians, Persians, and Jews whether Alexander enclosed the Jews and received a negative answer from all of them (cf. Simon, *Histoire*, 55).

52. Hugh, *Compendium*, vii, 10; quoted from Anderson, *Alexander’s Gate*, 62; on the attribution to Hugh Ripelin, see DiMarco, “Amazons,” 70, 83 n. 4, who calls Hugh “Mandeville’s indirect source” (79) and discusses the Amazonian presence in the legend. For a fuller account of the anti-Jewish elements of this passage, see Braude, “Mandeville’s Jews,” 151–58.

53. *Buke*, 94; cf. LMT, 2: 337, which, like some Insular manuscripts, reads “vn de ces ans.” The venom in question (which has no antidote except “ses propres fiens,” “one’s own excrement”; *Buke*, 94; cf. LMT, 2: 337) comes from the poison-bearing trees of “Thalamassy,” where this slanderous anecdote is recounted. Some Insular manuscripts tone down the claim about the antidote, reading “dez [propres] fueillez” (“the [tree’s own] leaves”); the Cotton, Defective, and Egerton Versions all read “leaves” (HMT, 1: 126; *TPE*, sig. F5; *Buke*, 94). “Fiens” is likely the original reading, after le Long’s Odoric, which says nothing about the Jews: “cilz qui a pris de cest venin, il preigne fiente de homme” (OPV, 173; cf. OPR, 448). Von Diemeringen’s Version also gets rid of the excremental antidote, only to claim that there is no cure (*OD*, 359).

54. *Buke*, 131–32, which contains the first bracketed sentence; cf. LMT, 2: 381–82, which contains the second bracketed sentence.

55. The unedited *Mirabilia mundi* is described in Burnett and Dalché, “Attitudes”; it derives almost verbatim from the mid-thirteenth-century *Epistola Prudenti*

viro addressed to Theodore, Frederick II's astrologer and extant in four manuscripts.

56. Quoted from the text of the *Epistola* (Burnett, ed., "Apocryphal," 166, emphasis added), which the *Mirabilia* borrows from here (Burnett and Dalché, "Attitudes," 160).

57. On Nehemiah, see HMT, 2: 131 note to 178/11; on the Cathars, see Burnett and Dalché, "Attitudes," 162 n. 48. For fictional analogues, see *Buke*, 214 n. to 132/8.

58. The Metrical Version also lacks everything, most likely as a result of missing leaves: see *Metrical*, 113–14 n. to line 2001.

59. *SJMR*, 150, emphasis added. *LIM*, 64, which reads "pro puro corde"; the Incunabular edition reads "puro corde" (*Itinerarius*, sig. G8 [ch. 40]).

60. *LIM*, 64.

61. Of the renderings that transmit the earlier story, the Cotton and Egerton Versions leave it effectively unchanged (although the latter does not attribute a "grande mortalitee" to the failed plot; *Buke*, 94), whereas von Diemeringen's reveals a cruder anti-Jewishness, alluding to the pogroms that took place after the Black Death, especially in the Rhineland: "Me ir [der jyden] eynen solte sterben und veriach es an syn dotsbette, und darnach wurdent dye andern gefangen und gedumelt und purgirt so sere, das sye dye warheit verjahent. Wer das nycht gewesen, sye hettent grossen schaden getan, wye woil sye syn genug dadent. Und darumb wurdent ir viel verbrant" ("But one of them [the Jews] was to die and confessed it on his deathbed, and the others were caught and roughed up and purged so severely that they admitted the truth. If that had not been, they would have caused great harm, although they did enough. And therefore many of them were burnt"; *OD*, 359–60, quoting E 16, which differs from C 18 but resembles the Middle Low German rendering: *ODIO*, 113, although E 16 and this rendering resemble each other). C 18 changes this all-too-real fiction slightly, making material evidence necessary to justify a pogrom: "die juden . . . kondens nicht geleucken, want man fant die virgiffte by jn" ("the Jews . . . could not deny it, when the poison was found on them").

62. *TPE*, sig. H2r–v; this version contains a few changes, however, one of them an error (the Jews have no "lawe" of their own, instead of no land). HMT, 1: 176 ("payneme"). *Buke*, 131 ("haythen"), 132 ("men . . . saise").

63. *Metrical*, 60 (line 2249), 59 (lines 2193–98).

64. *SJMR*, 152.

65. *OD*, 475 ("man meynet"; E 16 lacks these qualifying words, but the Middle Low German rendering does not: *ODIO*, 149); 476–77 ("dye tribus," quoting E 16, which differs slightly from C 18 and agrees with *ODIO*, 149); 480 ("meynent dye juden," quoting E 16, which agrees with *ODIO*, 150).

66. *OD*, 477 (C 18 for the "bosen juden"); 475 (C 18, red Jews). On the red Jews as the enclosed nations, see Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 72–74.

67. For references to Prester John, see Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 1–186; on Prester John generally, see Slessarev, *Prester John*, and Rachewiltz, *Prester John*. For Friar Jordan's remarks see Jordanus, *Mirabilia*, 42, 45, the first text to place Prester John in Ethiopia.

68. *OPV*, 433–34. Cf. *OPR*, 483, where the comment is about Prester John himself, rather than his land.

69. *Buke*, 133; cf. *LMT*, 2: 383.

70. *Buke*, 134; cf. LMT, 2: 384, which lacks the claim about marriage; it is part of the Continental Version, though, since it is in Velser (*SJMR*, 155). OPV, 434, and OPR, 483.

71. *Buke*, 134; cf. LMT, 2: 384; the account of Prester John's faith comes from claims in the *Littera*, none mentioning belief in the Trinity (Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 910, 916).

72. Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 916, emphasis added. *Buke*, 135, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 386.

73. Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 916. *Buke*, 135; cf. LMT, 2: 386.

74. Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 918, emphasis added. *Buke*, 136, emphasis added; cf. LMT, 2: 387, which differs considerably in syntax.

75. *Buke*, 137–38; cf. LMT, 2: 388–89. OPV, 473–75; cf. OPR, 488–89. On Latin Christian accounts of the Assassins, see Metlitzki, *Matter*, 222–35. Sir John sees the ruined Paradise for himself in the Liège (HMT, 2: 135 n. to 186/33), Vulgate Latin (*LIM*, 68), and von Diemerungen Versions (*OD*, 510).

76. Zarncke, ed., "Priester," 920 (service at court), 923–24 (quotations).

77. *Buke*, 136–37; cf. LMT, 2: 387.

78. *Buke*, 147; LMT, 2: 402, quoting the latter on Christendom's extent (the Insular Versions lacks the phrase "estoient tous crestiens").

79. *Buke*, 148; cf. LMT, 2: 402.

80. *Buke*, 136 ("four"), 148 (other quotations, emphasis added). The Bodley Version resembles the Egerton's account of Christian practice in Prester John's Land, but omits the onomastic explanation (LMT, 2: 470; *Bodley*, 117). *SJMR*, 175 ("Ynsel"), 170 ("item").

81. *OD*, 484, emphasis added; cf. *ODIO*, 152. *SJMR*, 154.

82. *OD*, 497–98.

83. Chantilly, Musée Condé MS. 699, fol. 70–70v, quoted from *OD*, lxxxiii.

84. *OD*, 499 ("man," quoting E 18, emphasis added), 500 ("Abir"); cf. *ODIO*, 156–57. LMT, 2: 489–90, renders a version of the first passage in which Ogier and Prester John share no blood ties; their kinship, though, is noted in these copies and the Liège Version.

85. *LIM*, 65 (all further quotations from the same page).

Chapter 7: Personal and Pagan Piety in the Direction of Paradise

1. *Buke*, 140–41; cf. LMT, 2: 394. This last "marvel" is as frivolous as anything in *The Book*. The East was not yet the space of erotic fantasy and sexual power such as it would later become (see Said, *Orientalism*, 186–88), but its marital and sexual customs sometimes prompted salacious stories and comments: see, for example, Polo's account of premarital promiscuity in "Tebet" (*Il Milione*, 111; cf. *Travels*, 172–73).

2. LMT, 2: 405; cf. *Buke*, 150, which differs slightly; I quote the Continental Version, whose reading closely resembles that of the Cotton and Egerton renderings. Deluz, *Livre*, 180 ("sévère"); citing W. G. L. Randles, *De la terre plate au globe terrestre* (Paris, 1980), 16–17, Deluz also notes that shortly after *The Book* appeared, Johannes Witte de Hese's *Itinerarius* established a new form of the eastern travel book based

on an itinerary in three key stages: Jerusalem, Prester John's Land, and the Earthly Paradise (*Livre*, 181). On the medieval Paradise, see Wright, *Geographical*, 261–65, and Patch, *Other*, 134–74.

3. *Buke*, 151; cf. LMT, 2: 406. For the source passage, see Thiel, ed., *Iter*, 359–60.

4. *SJMR*, 175 ("Dydastolum").

5. Cf. Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 138–39; De Poerck disagrees with her ("Tradition," 139).

6. This summary is based on le Long's French (OPV, 489–92; cf. OPR, 491–92), the *Mandeville*-author's usual source, Odoric's Latin being used mainly as a supplement.

7. OPV, 489, emphasis added; cf. OPR, 491. The passage in *The Book* is quoted throughout from De Poerck's critical edition of the longer Continental form, based on Brussels, Bib royale MS. 10420–25, fol. 74ra–76vb ("Tradition," 140–43; quoting 140, emphasis added; cf. *Buke*, 138, and LMT, 2: 389–90; the text of the 1371 manuscript varies more from De Poerck's than that of the Insular copy edited by Warner).

8. OPV, 489–92, emphasis added; cf. OPR, 491–92. De Poerck, "Tradition," 140; cf. *Buke*, 138, and LMT, 2: 389–90; same references for quotations in the next paragraph.

9. Devils were typically depicted with oversize heads, and Hell was often linked to fiery kitchen imagery: see Kolve, *Chaucer*, 262 fig. 123. Letts, *Sir John*, fig. 11 (opposite 97), reprints an early woodcut of the Devil's head from the von Diemeringen Version.

10. De Poerck, "Tradition," 140–41; cf. *Buke*, 139, and LMT, 2: 390–91. Several critics claim that the reference to the friar is meant to disguise the "plagiarism" of Odoric's narrative: 1891 Review, 443–44; Warner, "Mandeville," 911; Letts, *Sir John*, 35, 89.

11. De Poerck, "Tradition," 141; cf. *Buke*, 139, and LMT, 2: 391. Same references for quotations in the next paragraph.

12. *Buke*, 140; cf. De Poerck, "Tradition," 143, and LMT, 2: 393.

13. De Poerck, "Tradition," 142; cf. LMT, 2: 392.

14. De Poerck, "Tradition," 142, amending the editorial punctuation and adding "Neentmoins" from the 1371 manuscript (LMT, 2: 392).

15. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I: 3164, 3454.

16. De Poerck, "Tradition," 142; cf. LMT, 2: 392–93.

17. De Poerck, "Tradition," 143; cf. LMT, 2: 393.

18. *Metrical*, 62–63 (lines 2338, 2340, 2350–52); this version lacks the part of the opening description because of a lost manuscript leaf.

19. HMT, 1: 189, emphasis added. *Buke*, 139.

20. *Bodley*, 105 ("strangeled"; communion); LMT, 2: 466 (communion).

21. *SJMR*, 160 ("güter cristen"), 159 ("verdúplich"; the text's glossary has "gefährlich" with a question mark for this first adjective [273]), 162 (death), 163 (mark). Letts, *Sir John*, 91–94, translates the entire narrative as given in Velser's second redaction.

22. *SJMR*, 161, quoting the earlier redaction; the later form is given at 161–62 in the textual note to line 9.

23. *SJMR*, 161.

24. *SJMR*, 161–62. On the now lost fifteenth-century manuscript, see OPE, 45–46.
25. *LIM*, 54, and see also 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 65–66, 68, 69, 75; my discussion is based on Hakluyt's text. For the bibliographical context, see Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 359–64. Ridder, *Jean*, 177 n. 149, refers to the Odoric citations as “bisher nur in den Drucken nachgewiesene” (“previously recorded only in the printings”), which suggests that they are also found in the manuscripts.
26. *LIM*, 69, emphasis added.
27. *LIM*, 68 (“locus”), 69 (“resonant”).
28. *LIM*, 70.
29. *LIM*, 71.
30. *OD*, 514, quoting E 16.
31. *OD*, 522–23, quoting E 16 (altering “myr” to “[w]yr”). *LMT*, 2: 491–93, translates the entire account from an early printed edition, which contains numerous small variants.
32. These three names properly belong to two peoples, of course (the Brahmins and the Oxydraces, or Gymnosophists); the source of the *Mandeville*-author's error, as Deluz points out (*Livre*, 253), is the prose Alexander romance (Hilka, ed., *Altfranzösische*, 182).
33. *Buke*, 76 (emphasis added), 146 (later reference to Job); cf. *LMT*, 2: 315 (lacking the quoted words), 400.
34. *HMT*, 1: 101, and 2: 92 (editorial note to 101/5). *Buke*, 76. *ODIO*, 99 (with the scriptural citation); cf. *OD*, 316, which contains the variant “in allem syme lyden.”
35. *OPV*, 71; cf. *OPR*, 423. *Buke*, 82; cf. *LMT*, 2: 322.
36. *Buke*, 82; cf. *LMT*, 2: 322, which varies in numerous small ways: for example, the first quoted passage reads “Les aucuns aourent simulacres et les aucuns ydoles.” The isotopes that retain this passage, including the Cotton and Egerton Versions (*HMT*, 1: 109; *Buke*, 82), follow the Continental reading, although in context the Insular reading of the whole seems to make better sense.
37. *Buke*, 82; cf. *LMT*, 2: 323.
38. On the Pauline view of History, see Anne Higgins, “Medieval,” 241–44 (the Vulgate text of Romans 2: 14–15 is fully quoted at 242 n. 40).
39. *Buke*, 82–83, quotation from 82; cf. *LMT*, 2: 323.
40. *Buke*, 83; cf. *LMT*, 2: 323–24.
41. On the *Mandeville*-author's sources here, see Deluz, *Livre*, 253–55. On the legend's transmission, see Cary, *Medieval*, 13–14, 91–95; and on medieval views of the Brahmins and the Gymnosophists (who were often conflated), see Hahn, “Indian.”
42. *Buke*, 144, emphasis added; cf. *LMT*, 2: 397.
43. *Buke*, 144, changing “sumes” to “auons”; cf. *LMT*, 2: 398. This passage was likely inspired by Vincent of Beauvais' brief comments on the good life among the chaste “Seres,” as the Chinese were called before they became Cathayans (*Speculum naturale*, Bk. 31, ch. 129, col. 2394–95; quoted in *HMT*, 2: 141 note to 194/26).
44. *Buke*, 145; cf. *LMT*, 2: 398.
45. *Buke*, 145, 146; cf. *LMT*, 2: 399, 400.
46. Vincent, *Speculum historiale*, Bk. 4, ch. 66, 135. *Buke*, 145, emphasis added; cf. *LMT*, 2: 399.

47. *Buke*, 145–46 (“qe ceo”; “Et pur quoy”); cf. LMT, 2: 399. Hilka, ed., *Altfranzösische*, 184 (“Puis que tu es”), 185 (unable to rest).

48. *Buke*, 146; cf. LMT, 2: 400.

49. Hahn, 146; cf. LMT, 2: 400. On this question of the salvation of the infidel, see Hahn, “Indian”; this is a revised chapter of his *God’s Friends*, an important dissertation tracing the ideas of nature and natural law and interest in non-Christians from the twelfth to the fourteenth century; on the infidel in canon law and the mission to Asia, see Muldoon, *Popes*.

50. *Buke*, 146; cf. LMT, 2: 400.

51. *Buke*, 146; cf. LMT, 2: 400. Hamelius notes that “the current [c. 1920] Roman prayer-book prays only for the faithful, not for all men” (HMT, 2: 142 note to 197/32).

52. *Buke*, 146, 9 (Hermes); cf. LMT, 2: 400–401, 237. Editor: HMT, 2: 142 note to 198/1.

53. The Egerton Version links the ends of the earth in still another way; right before the account of Paradise, it relates a long legend about the salvation of Ultima Thule by St. Thomas of Canterbury, “þis martir . . . whas vertuz Godd wald publish and schew in þe ferrest end of þe world” (*Buke*, 220 note to 149/20).

54. Hahn, *God’s Friends*, 320 (“systematic”), 325–28 (Bacon and others). As Cary notes (*Medieval*, 93), Abelard viewed Dindimus as one of the four pre-Christian kings who foresaw Christ’s advent (the others were Solomon, David, and Nebuchadnezzar).

55. *OD*, 331 (333 [E 16]), 591; cf. *ODIO*, 104, 181. *LIM*, 48.

56. *Buke*, 83. *TPE*, sig. Frv.

57. “Qui”: *Buke*, 146; cf. LMT, 2: 400. *TPE*, sig. I4v–I5r; as Seymour notes in his introduction to this facsimile, one subgroup of this version contains only the first part of the double account (*TPE*, viii), that of the Alexander’s encounter with the Bragmeyans (Seymour’s subgroup 1, representing nine of the thirty-two extant manuscripts).

58. *Buke*, 145, 146, 144; emphasis added throughout (cf. LMT, 2: 399, 400, 398). HMT, 1: 196 (“synne”); 197 (“astoneyed”); 195 (“god loueth”); emphasis added throughout. Velsler’s Version also refers to Alexander’s “sin” against the Bragmeyans: “then he thought to himself that he would commit a great sin” (“do gedaucht er in im selber daz er ain groß sünd begieng”; *SJMR*, 176).

59. *Buke*, 144 (“Godd”), 145–46 (asceticism); 146 (“þat es,” emphasis added).

60. *SJMR*, 177.

61. The summational function would never have been an issue in von Diemerin-gen’s Version, of course, since the relevant material appears his fifth and final “book”; the same is true in the Bodley Version, here because of the redactor’s rearrangement of the text’s later sections so that the Khan’s Cathay in effect becomes its culminating destination.

62. *Bodley*, 117; cf. LMT, 2: 470.

63. *LIM*, 73.

64. *OD*, 535 (“Ogier,” quoting C 18), 536 (“sy,” quoting E 16, which agrees with *ODIO*, 166; C 18 reads: “they do not dispraise our lord Jesus Christ”; “[sy] misseloben nicht unsern herren *Jhesum Cristum*” [*OD*, 535]). In the Liège Version, the Ogier reference differs somewhat: “This people helped Ogier the Dane when he conquered that country of Ynde. But he left as soon as he heard of their goodness. For this is right in the midst of the land of Prester John, the emperor of Ynde” (“Ceste gent assist Ogier

le danoys quant il conquist che pays de ynde. Mais tantost sen party quant il ot entendu la bonte deauls. Car cest tout emmy la terre prestre iehan lempereur dynde”; quoting Chantilly, Musée Condé MS. 699, fol 68v, from *OD*, lxxxv).

65. *OD*, 541–42; “[nac]” and “[wol]” are the editor’s additions; “[das dye lute viel besser synt dan viel cristen]” is the reading in E 16 (*OD*, 542), which agrees with *ODIO*, 167; “[cristen]” is my addition from *ODIO*, which has the obviously correct reading in context; “[drei]” is my correction from “zwei,” a change supported by both E 16 and *ODIO*, as well as by the Continental and Insular Versions; “[iren]” represents a similar correction; the phrase “cynsedelen und andern guden” is lacking in both E 16 and *ODIO*.

66. *Metrical*, 66 (quoting lines 2463–64, 2468, 2493).

Chapter 8: *Having Come to Rest Despite Myself*

1. *OPV*, 434 (“une des greigneurs”), 451 (“hanap”), 452 (“homme commun”).
2. *Buke*, 154 (“De ceo pais”), 153 (“riche”), 154 (“a soun aise”); cf. *LMT*, 2: 410, 409.
3. *Buke*, 153, emphasis added; cf. *LMT*, 2: 408. *HMT*, 2: 146 note to 206/7. Unlike Hamelius, Howard offers a positive reading of the comparison, calling it “one of the most startling passages in English [sic] literature” (“World,” 16).
4. Brunetto Latini, *Livres*, 334.
5. *Buke*, 154, emphasis added; cf. *LMT*, 2: 410.
6. *Buke*, 154–55; cf. *LMT*, 2: 410; all further quotations from this theological argument have the same page reference; emphasis added wherever it occurs.
7. *HMT*, 2: 147 note to 208/29.
8. Brunetto Latini, *Livres*, 383; the other two requirements are “reconte,” or a recounting, of what has gone before, and “pite,” which the *Mandeville*-author soon tries to evoke for Sir John.
9. *Buke*, 155; cf. *LMT*, 2: 411, where, with perhaps better logic, the sentence is placed at the very end of this explanatory passage.
10. *Buke*, 155; cf. *LMT*, 2: 411.
11. *Buke*, 155; cf. *LMT*, 2: 411.
12. Cf. Letts, *Sir John*, 161.
13. *Buke*, 156, emphasis added; cf. *LMT*, 2: 411. *Buke*, xxix (Warner’s comment).
14. *Bodley*, 147. To the “loose ends” discussed here one should add those created by the “authorial” matter appended to some manuscripts of the Insular Version. Seven copies contain a brief Latin letter dedicating *The Book* to Edward III (Seymour, “Scribal,” 37–38, and *HMT*, 2: 14), whose court was interested in the East (in 1344, participants in a royal tournament came dressed as Tartars; Phillips, *Medieval*, 198). Odder than the letter, which is an obvious sort of deception in a work whose exordium requests corroboration from lords, knights, and nobles, is the Latin life of St. Alban of *Germany* appended to six manuscripts as if it were “Sir John’s” own work (Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 269–71; De Poerck, “Tradition,” 155–56; Seymour, “Scribal,” 43, 45).
15. *OD*, 567–68, quoting E 16, which agrees here with *ODIO*, 175; I amend “leben” to “glauben” as in *ODIO* and C 18, which adds the Jews to the list.

16. *OD*, 593–94, again quoting *E* 16, which agrees with *ODIO*, 182.
17. *LMT*, 2: 480 (“*Libri conclusiones*”). *Bodley*, 145 (block quotation; Rawlinson variants in square brackets; that copy lacks the words “and ydolatrie” as well as the first part of the last sentence). The two copies of the Bodley Version change the disposition of *The Book*’s later sections; the final sections of the Rawlinson text, in particular, suggest a purposeful restructuring designed to focus on *The Book*’s theological ends.
18. *SJMR*, 178, emphasis added; further references are also to this page.
19. The contradiction notwithstanding, the papal interpolation is still being read as the *Mandeville*-author’s own work (Zacher, *Curiosity*, 135; and see note 24 below); the true nature of the passage was known as early as 1840 (Schönborn, *Bibliographische*, 22–23).
20. The Egerton Version is known to be a later redaction (see my “One”), while the Latin interpolation clearly elaborates either the Defective or the Egerton Version’s interpolation, so neither of these represents the earliest form. On the possible French connection, see Sisam, ed., *Fourteenth*, 240–42, who thinks that the Cotton form is not prior, since “the contradiction . . . is sharpest” in it (241); my reading suggests otherwise.
21. *Buke*, 153; cf. *LMT*, 2: 407–8, which in the second instance has the words “nostre saint pere le pape.” *HMT*, 1: 205, emphasis added.
22. See May, “Dating,” for an intelligent discussion of why the papal interpolation cannot be used to date the English translations.
23. *Buke*, 18 (rejected Sultan’s offer), 71 (“il y auient”); cf. *LMT*, 2: 246, 308. *HMT*, 1: 209–10 (the bracketed word is the editor’s emendation of the scribal “grouous”); further references in the next two paragraphs are all to page 210 (all emphases added).
24. Some Middle English romances claim authenticity by referring to a written source elsewhere, including Rome (Spearing, *Readings*, 115). On “medieval concepts of literary closure,” see McGerr, “Medieval.”
25. *Buke*, 155–56. Reading the Egerton interpolation as authorial are Greenblatt, *Marvelous*, 34–35, and Phillips, *Medieval*, 206.
26. “And I tald”: *Buke*, 156 (emphasis added; the bracketed words were lost when the manuscript leaf was cropped). “And our holy fader”: Oxford, Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D 101; quoted from Bennett, *Rediscovery*, 295.
27. *Bodley*, 175 note to 146/7; all further citations from this page. The Cosin manuscript is briefly described on xviii, where Seymour suggests a date of “after 1485.”
28. On Sir John and the Nuremburg globe, see Moseley, “Behaim’s Globe.”
29. Quoted from De Poerck “Corpus,” 39, whose text is edited from Chantilly, Musée Condé MS. 699; two of the other five Liège manuscripts known to De Poerck contain the interpolated epilogue, a third manuscript being incomplete at the end.
30. On the historical actuality of the interpolated details, see Lejeune, “Jean,” 427–28.
31. *LIM*, 76.
32. *LIM*, 76; the translation is adapted from *HMT*, 2: 5–6, which also supplies the Latin variants recorded here.
33. *LIM*, 76–77; all further citations in this chapter are from the latter page.
34. The English translation is adapted from *HMT*, 2: 5–6, with the variants recorded.

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Works Cited

The following list contains three parts: (1) Editions of *The Book of John Mandeville*; (2) Other Sources; (3) Critical and Scholarly Studies. Treated as an anonymous work, *The Book* is listed under its editors' names; when no editor is named, the editorial title is used. Medieval authors whose names consist of a first name plus a place name (e.g., William of Boldensele) are listed under their first name. The few works cited at second-hand are not listed here.

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